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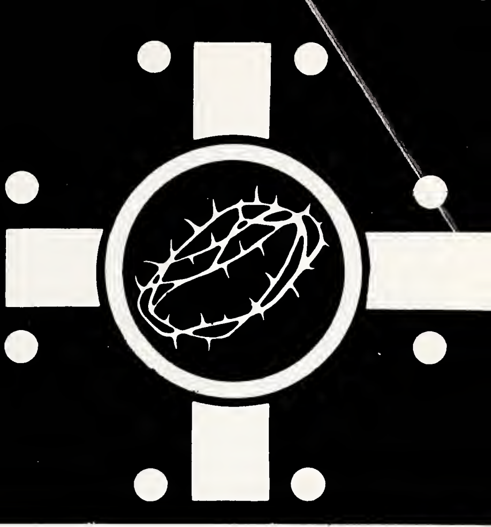

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Special Issue

A Study of 3 John

editorial

By David Pharr

With the numerous and rapid changes of technology in the modern world it may be easy to forget that people who lived 2,000 years ago were the same as ourselves in regard to the real essentials of human nature. Our study of the short epistle of 3 John shows us two men, both followers of Christ, who loved each other and who shared concern for the welfare of the church.

In this brief letter there are doctrinal implications, points about Christian service, and statements of both warning and commendation about certain other members of the church. It is beautiful to see how John regarded Gaius and his good services. It is sad to learn that there was a mean-spirited and powerful Diotrephes who had to be dealt with. It is refreshing to find reference to such a one as Demetrius. John's epistle is very much a reflection of real life even as it is today.

While the apostle was guided by the Holy Spirit, we cannot imagine that Gaius, Diotrephes, or Demetrius had any notion that these significant notes about them would be considered by millions of people for twenty or more centuries. We do not know whether they were buried with tombstones, or whether such tombstones might have had epitaphs etched upon them. If there were such monuments they no doubt have long since weathered away. But in 3 John there is an eternal epitaph for each of them.

What reputations do men leave behind? How shall we be remembered in the short time that one, two, or maybe three generations will still think about us? More importantly, what will be remembered of our lives in the eternal record of heaven? "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God...and the dead were judged...according to their works" (Rev. 20:12).

There are yet those who are as Diotrephes among us, leaders with power who regulate the brethren by presumption and intimidation, or who sway many by "good words and fair speeches" (Rom. 16:18). Some have an agenda to overthrow apostolic authority, just as did Diotrephes of old. Others use an exaggerated loyalty to the truth as an excuse for "prating against us with malicious words." But thank God there are also many with the truth and charity of a Gaius and with lovely reputations such as Demetrius.

A thank you is due each of the writers who have contributed to this mini-commentary. They are all faithful workers in Carolina congregations. Several readers have indicated that they found the October issue on 2 John to be useful. We are sending out this study of 3 John with the same expectation.

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David Pharr, Editor; Johnny Melton, Managing Editor; Dennis Conner, News Editor.

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A Letter to Gaius
3 John 1

By David Thompson

The elder unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

Background

It is difficult to imagine what church life would be like without a full-time minister, someone with a local address and phone number who consents to our beck and call. Things have certainly changed over the years. There was a time during the early religious development of America that itinerant preaching was the most efficient means of reaching a migratory society. Seldom staying in one place very long, these traveling evangelists made their way along the frontier following the masses westward. John Wesley, Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke were arguably the most renown "circuit riders" this country produced. Many preachers relied upon the generous hospitality of local church members to lodge them during their routine excursions. It was a rugged life. Sacrifices had to be made, but the spread of Christianity kept pace with the growth of the United States.

This was the scenario at the close of the first century. Unlike contemporary conditions, located preachers were the exception rather than the rule. Forced to plan ahead, Christians opened their homes to these "strangers" (a euphemism for missionaries; v. 5).

Purpose of the Letter

Ostensibly, 3 John was written by the apostle to urge Gaius, a colleague, to continue showing hospitality to missionaries, commending him for his loyal service. It seems that beyond the usual room and board given to each preacher a small stipend was provided (v. 8). This practice was apparently called into question by Diotrephes whose rancorous relationship with the church was known throughout the brotherhood. John's recrimination was no idle threat. As soon as his schedule allowed, John would censure this ecclesiastical juggernaut, setting him in his place. Demetrius, a faithful brother received honorable mention for his godly example.

Application

I am struck by John's intense appreciation for Gaius's hospitality. While Gaius may have lacked specialized skills, nevertheless the ancillary role he played was a vital link in the spread of the gospel.

Every member of the body of Christ serves a useful purpose. We are all endowed with certain abilities and aptitudes which contribute equally to the total well-being of the church (Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Pet. 4:10-11). As we coalesce, the work of the church is accomplished not just by those who have high profile positions such as preachers, teachers, elders, etc., but by those serving in more nondescript ways.

Professionalism is one danger that threatens to choke the life out of the church. Permitting the work of the church to bottleneck at the top with leadership instead of letting it trickle down to the "rank and file" members has a paralyzing effect on the entire body.

Church leadership has a responsibility to help each member discover, develop and deploy their abilities, supporting the needs of the many (Eph. 4:11-12). In the process they make each member feel as though they are a functional part of the church. It will create a kind of *esprit de corps* where every member feels good about the work he/she does no matter how menial it may seem.

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Gaius's commendation is the same encouragement we need today. As William Barclay suggested, not everyone can preach a sermon, conduct a Bible study, lead a discussion, or become a missionary. But we can render a supportive service to those who can. "The church needs those who will preach truth, but it also needs those who will be allies of truth at home."

[P. O. Box 654, Aiken, SC 29801.]

Live Long and Prosper
3 John 2

By Kirk D. Sams

Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

"Live long and prosper." Individuals instinctively raise their right hands with a familiar gesture in response to this phrase. From the popular T.V. show "Star Trek" comes this Vulcan greeting which developed into much more than an acknowledgement, it became a description of a philosophy of life. As the apostle John addresses his "beloved Gaius," he pauses for a moment to express his love and concern. "Dear friend, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul" (3 John 2, my translation, KDS). In verse 3 John shows that he has already been informed of Gaius's "faithfulness to the truth" and how he "continued to walk in the truth." This faithfulness had expressed itself even further as John said, "You are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you" (3 John 5, NIV).

Prosperity or success seems to be the ultimate dream of almost every person who has ever walked the face of this earth. John knew that his friend had achieved a status of which many could only dream. Gaius had found the point of harmony between health and wealth. The word which is translated "well with you" is one which has the meaning "to be led along a good road" (Arndt and Gingrich, **Lexicon**). It could also be translated "to prosper, to succeed, to get along well" Gaius had allowed Jesus to guide him along the "good road." He understood the necessity of using his gifts to the glory of God.

Jesus himself introduced the challenge of prosperity when immediately after the departure of the rich young ruler He said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:25). If prosperity was not somewhat of an indication of God's blessings, why did the disciples respond with, "Who then can be saved" (Mark 10:26b)? Jesus then sums up the challenge as He said, "I tell you the truth, no one who has left home or brothers or sister or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life, But many who are first will be last, and the last first" (Mark 10:29-31). Notice that the promises and blessings will come, but not without their own challenge.

The full scale purpose of our ability to use our health and wealth is summed up in Paul's encouragements to Timothy as he said, "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life" (1 Tim. 6:17-19). Gaius had taken hold of the true life because he knew the truth. He knew that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh to show us how to live in the Spirit. His faith and trust were in God to the extent that his love for God was expressed through his love for those in need (v. 6).

The key to success in this life is to realize that true success can only be accomplished in Christ, all else is merely a dream. Jesus said, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:19-21). The psalmist puts it this way, "From men which are thy hand, O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes. As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Psa. 17:14, 15). Perhaps Gaius and this author will meet someday. Do not be surprised if he says "Live forever and prosper"!

[111 Piedmont Dr., Kannapolis, NC 28081.]

The Elder's Joy
3 John 3-4

By Mike Mays

For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkedst in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

Confucius is quoted as saying: "Those who know the truth are not equal to those who love it, and those who love it are not equal to those who live it." The elder had good reason to rejoice over the life of Gaius, who not only knew the truth and loved it, but also lived it.

In 3 John 3, the elder, generally acknowledged to be the apostle John, says concerning Gaius: "For I was very glad when brethren came and bore witness to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth" (NASB). Although the brethren could have been ordinary Christians whose business had brought them to the town where the elder lived, it seems more likely that they were traveling missionaries who had enjoyed the hospitality of Gaius and were now visiting John. Three verses later the text refers to "the brethren" as those who were worthy to be supported or assisted in their work. By so assisting them Gaius would be a fellow worker with the truth (v. 8). Those who financially support missionaries share in the fruit that results from their labor (Phil. 4:17). The requirement is added in 2 John 9-11 that these itinerant preachers were not to be assisted if they were false teachers. In the Greek text the verb "came" is in the present tense indicating that several visits were made.

"Truth" is mentioned six times in 3 John, the shortest New Testament epistle in the original Greek. Referring to Gaius, verse 3 says the brethren bore witness to "your truth." The truth was his in the sense that Gaius possessed it, cherished it in his heart, and walked in it. The "truth" is a synonym for the Gospel, the faith, or the Word of God (John 17:17). This objective truth was designed by God to be received, believed, known, and loved, but also to be obeyed (John 8:32; 2 Thess. 2:10-12; Gal. 5:7). Gaius lived the truth he learned. I. Howard Marshall commented: "Soundness in doctrine is no doubt included in the thought, but the basic point is that Gaius' life of loving hospitality for other Christians (vv. 5-6) indicated his adherence to the truth." In the words of William Barclay: "The truth is that which makes a man think like God and act like God."

Contrary to the modern concept that we are all merely trying to find out what the truth is through a perpetual pursuit, the early church knew the truth, and that knowledge made them free, as Jesus promised (John 8:32). No one can rightly claim to have cornered the market on truth or to know all of the truth that can be gleaned from the Scriptures. But we can know the truths essential to salvation, and we can know that we know them. A lifetime is spent learning additional truths from the inexhaustible reservoir of wisdom for living found in the Bible (2 Pet. 3:18).

* * *

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The elder has "no greater joy" than to "hear of my children walking in the truth" (v. 4). In the Greek a double comparative is employed for emphasis. "My children" may refer to converts of John. Paul described his converts as his children (1 Cor. 4:14; Gal. 4:14; 1 Tim. 1:1). The implication may be that the elder had been instrumental in converting Gaius to Christ. John's primary concern in life ought to be our primary concern — to help other people come to know, obey, and live the truth. Only by obedience to the truth can our souls be purified (1 Pet. 1:22).

No greater cause for joy can be found in the hearts of preachers, missionaries, and teachers than the assurance that those converted are abiding in the truth. On the other hand, no greater source of heartache can be found than knowing that those who have been baptized into Christ are no longer walking in the truth. The only power on earth that can convert people is the gospel, the word of God (Rom. 1:16; 1 Thess. 2:13). The heart of God must be grieved when He hears shallow "feel good" sermonettes coming from our pulpits instead of convicting, Bible-based, Christ-centered sermons that call for wholehearted obedience to God and full surrender to the authority of His will. People cannot change truth, but truth can change people.

Gaius had that balance of love and truth that made his life pleasing to God. Not only did he walk in truth, but also in love (v. 6). Both are essential. As John R. W. Stott explained: "The fellowship of the local church is created by truth and expressed in love. Each qualifies the other.... Our love for others is not to undermine our loyalty to the truth. On the other hand we must never champion truth in a harsh or bitter spirit.... We are to avoid the tendency to extremism, pursuing either at the expense of the other. Our love grows soft if it is not strengthened by truth, and our truth grows hard if it is not softened by love. We are to live according to Scripture which commands us both to love each other in the truth and to hold the truth in love."

The tribute paid to Gaius, that he walked in truth, is one of the highest compliments that can be paid to any Christian. If that same commendation can be said of us, reason for joy will be found in the heart of God, in the hearts of those responsible for our conversion, and in our own heart.

[2227 Tot Hill Farm Rd., Asheboro, NC 27203.]

Christian Hospitality
3 John 5-8

By Craig Hinrichs

Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: because that for His name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow helpers to the truth.

Commendation for Past Hospitality

Gaius is commended for prior hospitality to brethren he had not previously known (vv. 5-6a). The New International Version makes John's intended meaning clear, "Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you. They have told the church about your love." The combination of Greek words meaning "love" and "stranger" produces a word which is translated into English as "hospitality." Hospitality is not an option for disciples, but a requirement (Rom. 12:13; 1 Pet. 4:9; Heb. 13:12-13). In Gaius we have the embodiment of hospitality as a model to follow.

Confidence in Future Hospitality

The New American Standard Version captures the sense of the last part of verse 6, "You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God." The brothers that had once visited Gaius would be visiting again. John here refers in the future tense to his confidence that Gaius would do a good job in making the necessary preparations for sending forth these workers to their next destination with adequate provisions. This responsibility is not expressed as a command or even a request. It is expressed as something that he knows will happen. A faithful, truth-loving brother will take personal responsibility for seeing that other brothers are cared for whether he knows them or not.

Although John has expressed confidence that Gaius would take personal responsibility in providing for these men, the first person plural pronoun in verse 8 indicates that all Christians have the responsibility of hospitality toward those going out to do Christ's work.

Reasons to Extend Hospitality

There are three reasons given in this text for hospitality to be extended to these men.

First, they went forth "for His name's sake." "His name" refers to Christ. They went out doing His work in spreading His message. Since these men's total purpose in life was doing the Lord's work, they ought to receive provision that is worthy of God.

Second, they needed the help of Christians to do their work for the Lord. They received nothing from the Gentiles. This probably referred to non-Christians rather than non-Jews. Those devoting themselves wholly to the Lord's work should be supported by other Christians.

Third, those who participate in providing hospitality for such men become fellow helpers to the truth. Just as receiving false teachers places us in fellowship with them in their work (2 John 9-11), receiving teachers of truth places us in fellowship with them in their work. We become partakers of, and helpers of, the work they are doing wherever it may be. Hospitality becomes a means by which any individual can transcend time, space, and other personal limitations in doing the work of Christ.

Application to Us

How can we practice the hospitality commanded, encouraged, praised, and modeled in the New Testament, thereby multiplying our effectiveness in accomplishing the work the Lord has assigned us to do?

First, we need to realize what biblical hospitality is. It is not merely inviting the members of the local congregation over to your house for doughnuts and coffee after services, although one with a hospitable spirit may do this. Instead, it is showing love to brethren to the end of assisting them in their service to Christ. It consists of two elements, receiving and sending. "Receiving" is welcoming the traveling workers and providing for their needs during their stay in your area. "Sending" means that you provide what they need to get them to their next destination. It could also include helping them in these other areas when there are no Christians there. Paul received help from the Macedonians in these ways (Acts 18:5; Phil. 4:15-16). To summarize, hospitality is providing material help to those devoting their entire lives to the spread of the gospel of Christ. Any provision for their needs is hospitality since it is a concrete display of love toward those people whom we may or may not know, except that they are faithful workers for God.

Second, whom do we help? Very simply, brethren and families that have given their lives for the spread of the gospel of Christ. They may be students in schools of preaching or in universities preparing for the field. They may be foreign or domestic mission workers. They may be preachers in our area with no other means of support. When we are exposed to such workers for Christ, we should open our homes and tables to them. We should help them with their expenses. We should send them to their destination in a manner worthy of the Lord.

Needs of Today that This Passage Exposes

The disciples in the first century had many problems. However, they successfully accomplished the evangelization of the world as the Lord had instructed them to do. We are failing at obeying this command in spite of superior numbers of people, transportation, and communication. Why we are failing becomes evident as we examine this short passage which gives insight as to the Lord's intended methodology for the accomplishment of this mission. This examination reveals several needs of the church today.

First, we need to realize that love of truth and love of people are not mutually exclusive. Gaius, who is described as walking in truth has his active love toward the brethren considered "faithful" by John. Consideration for truth and love are both necessary for one's walk to be faithful to the Lord (1 John 1:5-2:11). Both are necessary for the church to function and grow as the Lord intends (Eph. 4:11-16). Compromising truth to accommodate people is not the Lord's way. Neither is running roughshod over people under the guise of contending steadfastly for the truth the Lord's way. Emphasis of one over the other produces ungodly division in the body of Christ, as the church of today bears witness. Healthy growth of the body demands a balanced concern for both.

Second, we need people to rise up from among us that are willing to forego material security to focus completely on advancing the message of Christ; men willing to go wherever they think God wants them to go, trusting His provision, and willing to work, if necessary, for their own needs and the needs of those with them. "Living by faith" is too often an abstract concept rather than a concrete manner of life. Such a life is not without risk. There is abundant peril before us. The "downside" risk of such a life is that we will make mistakes. We will look like, and be considered by many to be, fools. We might be without honor, sometimes hungry, sometimes thirsty, and possibly poorly clothed and homeless. People that have adopted such a lifestyle have often faced rejection and experienced violent deaths. Considering these risks, why would anyone knowingly choose such a way of life? Faith in the living Christ and a sincere desire to serve Him are the only reasons. The "upside" potential of such a life is intimate communion with Him, a knowing accomplishment of His mission for our lives, and eternity in heaven with Him. For one that considers the fellowship of Christ as the only ultimately worthwhile thing, the decision for such a lifestyle is easy. One must wonder why more of us are not choosing to live like this.

Third, more fellow-helpers with truth are needed. The number of mission workers recently has decreased, so has the support for mission efforts. With the present level of material blessings in America and the newly-opened doors to mission activity in formerly Communist countries, we must seriously examine our personal involvement in mission support. How can we give less when we have been so blessed? How can we give less when the need is so great? How can we neglect hospitality when it is so clearly a part of Christianity? How can we seriously consider that we have restored the New Testament pattern of Christianity when such a vital element is diminishing? We each must ask ourselves "Am I doing as the Lord has instructed me in the area of hospitality? Do I have a meaningful part in the work of spreading His message to the world?" May we all be exhorted to make the necessary changes in our lives that the answer to these questions may be, "Yes!" May we practice hospitality.

[211 West Washington St., Winnsboro, SC 29180.]

Diotrephes Loved the Preeminence
3 John 9-10

By Claude W. Pharr

I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes who loveth to have the preeminence among them receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.

Diotrephes is symbolic of the unholy desire for religious power and position. He was a church boss or at least aspired to be one. The apostle John in his short letter to Gaius wrote some very plain words about him.

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It is interesting that it was John who had to deal with Diotrephes and his love of preeminence in view of John's own earlier ambitions. Mark tells the story like this: "And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto Him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John" (Mark 10:35-41). Jesus used this occasion to teach his disciples an important lesson on true greatness. "But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones excise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:42-45). There is a fundamental difference between the kingdom of Christ and those of the world. In Christ's kingdom greatness is measured by service, not by power, or authority or position. The spirit of Diotrephes was the exact opposite of the spirit which Jesus taught and exemplified.

Diotrephes's love of preeminence led to other sins. At least three are named by John in his letter to Gaius. First, he rejected apostolic authority. John said, "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes ...receiveth us not." The rejection of John's authority was serious. Long before the days of Diotrephes Jesus said to the twelve: "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city" (Matt. 10:14-15). Later in the same chapter Jesus said to them: "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me" (Matt. 10:40). Diotrephes was certainly on dangerous ground when he opposed John. In so doing he was rejecting apostolic authority.

Secondly, he sought to discredit John and his co-workers by verbal attacks against them. John wrote of his "prating against us with malicious words" (v. 10). Evil speaking against another always has God's disapproval. James warns against evil speaking in these words, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge" (James 4:11).

Thirdly, he not only failed to do his duty, he also prevented others as well. "Wherefore if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church" (v. 10). This is reminiscent of the Pharisees who not only rejected Christ, but also stood in the way of others who would have accepted him. "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (Matt. 23:13).

The Lord's church has been plagued from the outset by proud men like Diotrephes who love to have the preeminence. We must each make every effort to guard ourselves and the church against this wicked and destructive disposition.

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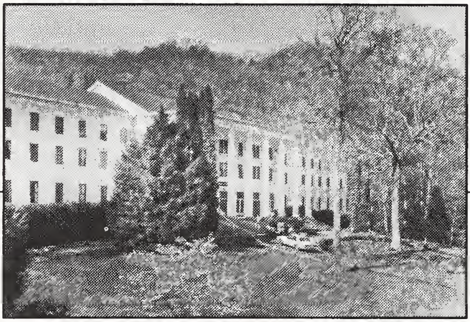

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Identifying God's People
3 John 11

By Paul Kirkpatrick

Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

The latter part of the twentieth century can certainly be characterized as an age of subjectivity. Moral judgments may now be made solely on one's own viewpoint without the consideration of others. Even terms like "good" and "evil" have become relegated to personal opinion.

In verse eleven of 3 John, the author is not speaking of a subjective good or a subjective evil, but rather a good and an evil that are exclusively defined by a person's conduct.

John prefaces this verse by explaining to Gaius that he is much appreciated for his willingness to walk in the truth (v. 3). He also relates that Gaius must continue in this walk by being receptive to those who are itinerant in the work for God, that Gaius might be esteemed as a fellow helper in the gospel (v. 8).

Diotrephes, on the other hand, is one whom John denounces as one who not only would not give heed to the apostles, but was also guilty of speaking maliciously of them. Further, as if that were not enough, he states that Diotrephes's power was so great, that those who received the travellers, were cast out by him. Therefore, John wanted to admonish Gaius to choose the right way, "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads to life" (Matt. 7:14).

John makes a clear distinction in this verse that one who does good is of God. It can clearly be seen from the tenor of his earlier admonition to Gaius, that the good is exclusive to walking with God. John defines this goodness in similar phrases. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

In 1 John 1:7, the situation of fellowship and atonement is conditional to walking in the light. In 1 John, the conditional element is indicated grammatically (**ean**, i.e., "if"), but in 3 John 11 the very nature of the second sentence denotes that one's spiritual condition is based upon one's conduct.

In the final four words of this verse, John vividly portrays the state of the evil doer in an almost sarcastic tone, in that "he hath not seen God." This was certainly the same problem Jesus was dealing with in His confrontations with the religious leaders of the day. One is reminded of passages like John 5:37-38, "And the Father himself which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you." The emphasis here is not whether or not they had physically seen or heard God, but rather that He rebuked them because they were not abiding in His word.

Not only must one abide in God's word, but John also reminds us that if we manifest love for one another, God dwells in us. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby do we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us his Spirit" (1 John 4:11-13).

When Jesus spoke specifically to His apostles, He said, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him" (John 14:7). Obviously, this verse does not imply that the visage of Jesus was that of God the Father. It means, however, that the life of Christ in every way, epitomized the essence of the Godhead. In a similar way John says, "He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God."

John wanted Gaius and all others who seek righteousness to follow (**mimou**, from which we derive the word "mimic") the good and to abstain from evil. We remember John's promise in 1 John 5:12, "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

"You can't tell the players apart from the others without a program." This is a familiar sales pitch heard at sporting events around the country. There are many among our brethren who would draw either wide or narrow lines of fellowship, according to their disposition. This delineation would also be accompanied by elaborate rationalization of their views, along with "extensive exegetical support." God has made it simple to determine the difference between one who has received God's word, such as Gaius, and one who has rejected God's word, as did Diotrephes. God gave us two eyes, an adequate mind, and Matthew 7:20, which says, "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." *[Windsor Lake Church of Christ, 238 Windsor Point Road, Columbia, SC 29223.]*

A Good Reputation

3 John 12

By C. David Shuping

Demetrius has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our witness is true (NKJV).

The third letter of John discusses three specific characters: Gaius (to whom the epistle is addressed), Diotrephes (the erring brother) and Demetrius (the brother with the good testimony). This article will survey the passage concerning Demetrius, explore the intended meaning, and suggest contemporary applications of the text.

Who is Demetrius?

The character of 3 John 12 is Demetrius and the character of Demetrius is the subject of the passage. That is, the reputation of this brother in Christ and how he is to be perceived by the members of the church is the author's concern.

The first issue that must be dealt with concerns the identity of Demetrius. Can he be positively identified? The answer is no. However, most New Testament scholars agree that the possibilities generally fall into three categories.

The first possible identity suggested for John's Demetrius is the Ephesian silversmith of Acts 19. The context of Acts 19:23-41 concerns a Demetrius whose livelihood includes the manufacturing of silver shrines of the goddess Diana (Greek goddess, Artemis). The silversmiths's guild, under the direction of Demetrius, banned together to rid the city of those who were of "the way." Though money was the real motivation, opposition was stirred under the guise that Paul's Gospel could cause the reputation of the smiths to be tarnished and, worse yet, that the goddess Diana and Ephesus itself could fall under civic dishonor. Nothing becomes of the uproar and Demetrius is not mentioned again. There is no evidence, sacred or profane, confirming the conversion of Demetrius nor verifying his identity as the Demetrius of 3 John.

The second possibility is that Demetrius is the Demas mentioned by Paul. A. T. Robertson avers that Demas is a shortened form of Demetrius (Robertson, 265) a very common Greek name (Douglas, 277). If John's Demetrius is Paul's Demas, he is mentioned three other times in the New Testament. Chronologically, the first two references of Demas, both favorable mentions, place him near or with Paul during the apostle's first imprisonment in Rome (Col. 4:14; Phile. 24). The third reference casts a cloud over the reputation of Demas, for as Paul nears the end of his life he tells Timothy that "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Tim. 4:10).

The third possibility is that the Demetrius of John's third epistle is neither of the previously mentioned but a brother whose character was under suspicion for some reason or another. In this case, no other history is known of him.

If the Demetrius of third John is the silversmith or the deserter, he would have been in need of support. Both were previously known for their bad reputation in the area of the epistle's assumed destination. If he is either of the above, the situation would have been likened to Saul needing the good word of Barnabas to cover his past (cf. Acts 9:23ff). Regardless of his identity, Demetrius acquired a glowing report from a notable authority. Furthermore, most commentators agree the reputable Demetrius probably led the delegation bearing John's epistle to Gaius.

Three Testimonies

The relevance of 3 John 12 is not the positive identification of Demetrius, but the issue of his character and reputation. For reasons unsure to us, the reputation of Demetrius must have been questioned and John sought to calm their apprehensions.

Three witnesses (testimonies) are offered in behalf of the apostolic emissary. The first testimony is that which "has been witnessed to Demetrius by all men" (Robertson, 6:265). The function of the perfect passive verb (Summers, 103) indicates that Gaius and the church already knew of the good reputation of Demetrius. It was established testimony which was still valid. Whether he is a repentant silversmith, former Pauline helper, or other servant of Christ, his reputation preceded his arrival.

The second testimony supporting the good name of Demetrius is "the truth itself." Clinton Gill postulates that this refers to the truth, as opposed to the errors of Gnosticism. In other words, amidst the doctrinal battle raging over the diety of Christ, Demetrius is known for his stand for the truth. A. T. Robertson suggests it is a reference to the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 John 5:6). If so, John means that even divine revelation has attested to the reputation of Demetrius (Robertson, 265). Believe it!

The third testimony submitted on behalf of Demetrius is apostolic approval. John the elder, writing in the "literary plural" (Robertson, 266). offers his own testimony in support of Demetrius, expecting that Gaius and the church will take stock in the word of an inspired apostle. The inspired word should be enough for any elder or Christian in any age.

Modern Application

Most Bible students are familiar with Solomon's words of wisdom, "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold" (Prov. 22:1). The king's point is that a person's good reputation is priceless in this world. Legion are they who have received privileges in school, labor, and politics based primarily on their good reputation. The same privileges are often denied to those whose character and integrity are questionable.

Christians have been called out of this world to reflect the good reputation and character ("image") of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). Children of God must live their lives above the standard of the world, inasmuch as their eternal citizenship is not of this world (Phil. 3:20). When Christians are guided by the Spirit of Christ they will acquire a godly reputation that will follow their presence into heaven (Rev. 14:13).

Regardless of the past life of John's Demetrius, his current reputation won him apostolic approval and a place in the chronicle of Sacred Writ. The modern church would do well to honor the earned reputation of the converted sinner or repentant brother who once espoused doctrinal error. It is the duty of the church to help build, or rebuild as the case may be, the good reputation of its faithful members.

May God bless each Christian in the development of a godly reputation so that the whole body may glorify its Head before a skeptical and accusing world.

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Friendship as Christians
3 John 13-14

By Donald F. Rhodes

I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee: But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

Adam Clarke said, "We seldom hear this epistle quoted but in reproof of lordly tyrants, or prating troublesome fellows in the Church. And yet the epistle contains many excellent sentiments, which, if judiciously handled, might be very useful to the Church of God" (**Clarke's Commentary**, Vol. VI, 943).

Brother Guy N. Woods observed, "That the apostles were not always involved in written or oral discussions of profound theological themes;...they had their tender and personal sides, and the world is greatly blessed by this short letter to Gaius by the apostle whom Jesus loved" (**A Commentary on New Testament Epistles**, Vol. VII, 367).

Third John 14 illustrates the tender affection, love and friendship between the beloved apostle John and his fellow-Christian, Gaius. These same tender feelings must be unhypocritically manifest between God's children today. The manifestation of these demonstrates the qualities of true friendship.

Friends Desire the Company of Each Other

John told Gaius, "I trust I shall shortly see thee...." His plans included being with Gaius and as friends to share mutual concerns, joys and hopes more fully.

Dedicated Christians today, desire the company of fellow Christians. There is no one as dear to a true Christian as a fellow, faithful and caring member of God's family. One danger sign of a weakening spiritual life is the desire to be with worldly people more than in the fellowship of Christians. We must understand that "Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4b).

Those of us who have preached the gospel for several years, know people who have fallen away from the Lord. The pattern is nearly always the same. Second Peter 2:20 shows the pattern:

1. They have learned the truth of God's Word.
2. They have escaped from sin by applying the knowledge received.
3. They are free, saved children of God.
4. They begin again to entangle themselves with worldliness.
5. They are soon over come again and therefore lost once more.

People who fall away were once saved! They could have remained saved had they remained in the company and fellowship of God's people rather than turning again to the world. How sad it is when children of God desire the company of worldly people rather than the company of their own brethren.

Friends Discuss Things of Importance

John desired to speak with Gaius face to face. He had many things to write but did not because he planned soon to see Gaius. John knew it was better to discuss things face to face rather than by letter. How much more wonderful the understanding and friendship would be between Christians if brethren would humbly sit down, face to face and, in true Christian love, friendship and concern for truth, discuss God's eternal word. Too many times even brothers and sisters in Christ shy away from discussing Scriptural matters that may be misunderstood or troubling to them. Beloved, these things ought not so to be.

The truth of God's Word is the most important thing in the world. Surely it must mean more to God's people than the weather, sports and politics. The salvation of souls will never be accomplished by the above things. It can, must and will be accomplished by the proper understanding and application of God's word.

Friends Desire the Best for Each Other

The tender salutation of John expresses his longing for the best for Gaius. The expression, "Peace be to thee," reminds us of the Lord's greeting to His disciples in John 20:19,26. "Peace" is more than a casual greeting. It sums up the divine blessings for the Christian, through Christ. It is superior to the world's understanding and it keeps (guards) the Christian's heart and mind through Christ (Phil. 4:7). Therefore genuine lasting peace comes only through complete obedience to the will of our Lord.

Friends desire this peace for their friends and loved ones. This is why a Christian will discuss the Scriptures with neighbors and loved ones. He desires that they also have this perfect peace that is only possible through humble, obedient submission to the will of God.

Christians Do Have Friends

The expression, "Our friends salute thee," reveals that John had other friends. These friends were drawn close to Gaius and sent their greetings to him. They also wished him the best. This attitude of affection exists between true Christians.

When we have visited the mission field in Scotland or Brazil and have mentioned our brothers and sisters at home, we have witnessed the expressions of tender feeling for them and the desire for their best. They feel as though they know them just because we know them. They love them because we love them. This is Christian friendship at its best!

Friends Cherish Being Remembered by Their Friends

"Greet the friends by name." There seems to be nothing more heartwarming than being remembered by name. The closer the friendship, the more dear the name. John felt extremely close to Gaius and the brethren who were with him. He wanted them to know this was more than just a casual greeting, more than just a passing thought, it was a sincere greeting from the heart of John.

In John 10:3, Jesus said the shepherd "calleth his own sheep by name." This would suggest knowing each sheep individually. This takes time and effort. Would not this suggest that Christians must also take the time and make the effort to know each other? That we not be satisfied with just a casual acquaintance?

Friend, how much do you know about your fellow Christians? How much effort have you made to get close enough to other Christians to understand their hopes, sorrows, spiritual concerns, love, prayers and needs? Christians should be the most closely knit people in the world. Christians are to be one in Christ.

Conclusion

There is no friendship equal to Christian friendship. It is God's desire for Christians to "all speak the same thing and that there be no division among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). Jesus prayed for His followers to all be one just as He and the Father are one (John 17:21). Only when we develop and manifest the same spiritual attitude as did John, will "Peace be to thee."

[P. O. Box 731, Mauldin, SC 29662]

Music in Early Christian Worship

By Shane Pinson

The inclusion of instrumental music in worship to God was prevalent in pre-Christian Jewish worship of the Old Testament. However, history shows that the early Christian church, which came about after Christ's death, did not use instruments of music to accompany vocal praise to God. In fact, the first record of an instrument being used in worship was not until nearly a thousand years after the New Testament was written (Ferguson, 81). The reason instrumental music was not used in worship by the early Christians was because their proper exegesis of New Testament teachings on singing ruled out the use of instruments.

Initially, whenever singing was dealt with in the New Testament, instrumental music was not mentioned. In Matthew 26:29-30, Jesus sang a hymn with the apostles before He left the house to be betrayed. Paul and Silas sang and prayed while in prison in Acts 16:25 and were shortly thereafter freed by an earthquake. Paul instructed the church at Ephesus to sing to each other and to make melody in their hearts in Ephesians 5:19 and told the Colossians the same thing for the purpose of teaching each other in Colossians 3:16. Paul urged the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 14:15 to sing with the Spirit and to understand the words of the songs they sang. The writer of Hebrews stated that he would sing the praises of Christ in the midst of the church in Hebrews 2:12 (Clarke, 1251). James 5:13 said to let the merry sing psalms. I think it would have been absurd for the early Christians to use instruments in worship when they had not been instructed to do so by the book they used to organize themselves. If worship with an instrument had been acceptable to them then there would have had to have been some record of the instrument's use in the New Testament. Mark 7:7-8 warns about the fallacy of placing traditions above Scriptural doctrine. It seems the early Christians tried to be careful about introducing unscriptural doctrine into their lives and worship services so that the Bible's authority could be maintained.

Moreover, there were several Greek words and phrases which the writers of the New Testament had an opportunity to choose from when speaking of musical terms in worship. Both **kitharizo** and **auleo** referred to playing specific instruments while **kreko** meant simply "to play." When speaking of vocal singing only, they could have used either **ado** or **humneo** (Fersuson, 2). However common these verbs might have been in everyday language, there is little use of them in the New Testament. The Greek word most often used in the New Testament when speaking of singing is the verb **psallo**. It was a very interesting term in that its true etymological meaning was "to pluck" and so it was most often used as "to play a stringed instrument" (Ferguson, 2). However, when used in the context of the New Testament, Paul, the author of Ephesians and Colossians, used the verb without an object to receive the action. When he used the verb in this way, I feel that Paul meant for the Christian's heart to be plucked with his or her song and to praise God with meaning and understanding. What Paul was trying to convey was the idea that vocal music was for edification of the brethren as well as praise to God. Because instruments are inanimate objects, it is impossible to use them to edify or extol the praises of any being, so the early Christians could not see a use for them in the service.

Furthermore, silence and exact statements are to be respected according to the Bible itself. In Hebrews 7:12-14, the writer speaks of a changed law due to a changed priesthood. This new priesthood was prophesied of in Ezekiel 21:26-27 and Zechariah 6:11-12. Because the Old Testament made no mention of a priest coming from the tribe of Judah (priests were limited to originating from the tribe of Levi), when the Messiah (who was of Judah) fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament, the old law had to pass away since the Christ could not be justified as a priest from Judah, under the old law. The new law, which was responsible for the forming of the church, was then put into place after Christ's ascension. As instrumental music was not a part of this new commandment or law (although it was permissible in the Old Testament), the people respected the silence of the New Testament Scriptures on the matter and refused to do something for which they had no authorization. In order to have been justified in their use of an instrument, there would have had to have been some implication of the instrument's use which was necessarily inescapable in the Scriptures of the New Testament.

If the early Christians had used instruments without permission to do so, they would have been voluntarily undermining the authority of the new covenant, and the Bible in general, which was their method of receiving divine commandments. I feel that if these things had lost their importance, then the church would have soon fallen apart because there would have been no "unchangeable" standards to which obedience was not questioned.

In summation, it is evident that the early Christians did not use instrumental music due to their exegesis of the apostolic command to sing. The old law which supported instrumental music in worship had been done away with in the time of these Christians, who were under the new law. As early Christians had no examples of instrumental worship in their sacred scriptures, and no etymological implications of such, they understood singing without instrumental music to be proper due to their understanding for the New Testament.

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[Editor's Note: Shane is a 17-year-old member of the South Fork Church in Winston-Salem. This article came from a paper he wrote for a class at the N.C. School of Science & Math. He got a B+ on the paper. We give him an A+ for his interest in spiritual issues and for his loyalty to biblical truth.]

Some Practical Advice for Church Leaders

By David Pharr, Editor

One does not need to be a prophet to realize that many things are changing in the moral climate of America — and very little of it for the better. In the next few years we can expect that conditions will deteriorate to the point that there will be open hostility toward churches that stand for biblical morality. We will be even more vilified in the media. Public opinion will be turned into open hostility against conservative churches. On the legal front, congregations will face lawsuits. The tax-free status of churches may be removed for any that refuse to accommodate whatever immorality the government decides ought to be acceptable.

There is a bill before Congress to pass legislation providing special protection for homosexuals. No doubt other laws will be passed which will make it difficult, if not impossible, for churches to **legally** exclude from membership and participation those who practice immoral lifestyles. There is also the possibility of radical feminist pressure to demand that any exclusion of women from any role in the church should be made an unlawful violation of civil rights.

Already churches have been sued for withdrawing fellowship from sinful members. Many congregations, wisely I think, have bought insurance protection against litigation. I am not an attorney, but my guess is that such insurance will rarely be helpful, however, when suits are brought on the basis of civil rights violations. And that is the direction being taken. It could become a federal civil rights violation to "discriminate" against a homosexual, for example. What happens, therefore, if a church is sued by a homosexual because the church withdrew from him?

It is still true that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse" (2 Tim. 3:13) and we can expect that the more corrupt society becomes, the more that "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). There are, however, some things which I believe we ought to be doing in every congregation to prepare against the growing power of hedonism in this country.

We should not wait until we are actually faced with a problem before making known what the position of a congregation is. Yes, our position is to follow the Bible, but the world may insist that we be more specific. What the Bible teaches, and what therefore every member is expected to believe, ought to be affirmed clearly and publicly on a regular basis. Perhaps a practical way to do this is to have special sermons on critical issues on an annual basis and to be sure that a record is kept regarding when such lessons were presented, and their content. Probably tape recordings which are dated and kept in a safe place would be sufficient evidence that such "statements of policy" have been publicly explained. It might be good for the leadership of the congregation to make a special announcement of their endorsement of these lessons. Of course the lessons should be

Scriptural, and they will be edifying to the congregation, but they will also place the congregation on record as having consistently held these positions.

Some subjects which, in my opinion, should be given such special attention are: the right and necessity of withdrawing of fellowship when required, the role of women in the church, divorce and remarriage, the use of alcoholic beverages and other intoxicating drugs (whether legal or illegal), homosexuality, fornication, and adultery.

Of course such lessons will have little value unless they are specific and plain. If preachers or elders cannot decide where they stand, and are either unable or unwilling to take a bold stand, the lessons will make little difference. If it can't be preached as Jesus preached it (Matt. 5:31-32; 19:3-9), or as the apostles preached it (Rom. 1:24ff; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 5:11; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15), there is something seriously wrong.

What About the Future?

By Jim Mullican

In the past twenty-five years, many things have changed in our society, mostly for the worse.

Since 1973, abortion has been legal, and the number of victims is staggering. The long war in Vietnam cost 58,000 American lives and stirred up a huge controversy in this country as a result. However, every two weeks 58,000 Americans die in abortion clinics, and it isn't even noted in the newspapers.

The courts, in a warped and perverted way of thinking, have ruled it illegal and unconstitutional to open a high school football game with a prayer for the safety of the players, or to ask God's guidance for graduating seniors. Yet the U.S. Constitution states, "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, nor prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

Twenty-five years ago, about the worst insult anyone could throw at another was to label him a homosexual—although the common term then was "queer." That was a much more fitting term than "gay," which is now treated as a badge of honor.

Twenty-five years ago, the words spoken freely on our televisions and the scenes shown would have resulted in a black-out of the show. Some will remember when Ed Sullivan refused to allow Elvis Presley to appear on camera from the waist down because of his "suggestive" gyrations. What appears today on MTV is explicit, not just suggestive.

More than one million Americans are addicted to cocaine, according to a recent newspaper report, with more addicted to heroin and other drugs. Many must spend $300-$500 per day for their drugs, so they steal, rob, and burglarize several times each day.

And now a new President, whom 57% of the people voted against, is preparing to take office, giving his blessing to many of these sins.

As Christians, we must remember that God has destroyed many a great nation when they sold themselves to do evil in the sight of God. I do not believe we have gone too far to repent, but if we continue down this path, destruction is waiting at the end of it.

But remember also that the early church grew and spread throughout the Roman Empire in spite of paganism, rampant immorality, and official hostility from the government. How did it happen? Acts 8:4 gives the answer: In spite of persecution and threats, "those who were scattered went about preaching the word."

When God commissioned Ezekiel as a prophet, He warned him that people didn't want to hear the truth, but God said, "You shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear; for they are a rebellious house" (Ezekiel 2:7).

We can do nothing more nor less, but let us pray they will listen. Otherwise, the USA cannot long endure. Great nations have learned that lesson before.

[P. O. Box 219, Clyde, NC 28721.]

Forty-Ninth Annual Carolina Lectureship Program

By Oscar P. Craft

The Forty-Ninth Annual Carolina Lectureship Program will be hosted by the Greer Church of Christ, Greer, South Carolina, April 5-8, 1993. The theme for this Lectureship will be **What Does The Bible Say?** The subjects for this program will deal with a number of doctrinal and social ills that are troubling the brotherhood today. The first session will begin on Monday afternoon at 1:30. All evening sessions will begin at 7:30. The morning sessions will begin at 9:00. Our featured speaker for this program will be David Pharr of the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions. He will speak at all the services on Sunday, April 4, and Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings at 9:00. Brother Pharr will be dealing with "The Role of Women" during the lectureship. You will not want to miss these timely lessons.

The Carolina Lectureship Program had its beginning in 1945 at Charlotte, North Carolina. When the program had its beginning one of its aims was to give the few preachers in the Carolinas an opportunity to come together to study God's Word and to hear reports on the work being done in various areas of the two states and to lend support and encouragement to each other in their work. On many occasions the host congregation has used this program in conjunction with a gospel meeting. After a few years this practice diminished, but in recent years the practice has been revived by some host congregations.

It is our desire that the Lectureship Program in 1993 will help each of us to have a better understanding of and to be better able to deal with some of these subjects. Among the subjects to be discussed are: Euthanasia; Abortion; Drug Abuse; Homosexuality; Gambling; Alcoholism; Humanism; Fellowship; Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage.

We extend an invitation to everyone to come and be a part of this Lectureship Program. For additional information you may contact the Greer Church of Christ, P. O. Box 625, Greer, South Carolina 29652-0625. Telephone (803) 877-8951.

Non-Alcoholic Beer

By Jim Mullican

If you watch any television, you've probably seen commercials recently for "non-alcoholic beer." If you read the fine print flashed on the screen for two seconds, you learn it isn't really non-alcoholic, but may legally make such a claim if it contains less than 0.5% alcohol. Regular beer contains 3.4% alcohol, and "Lite" beer somewhat less than 3%.

Those who work with drug abusers and keep statistics say that beer is the drug of choice in our society. It's legal, is sold in most grocery stores, and is advertized as though it were safe as water. Yet it results in more than 20,000 deaths on the highway each year, plus numerous deaths from liver disease, heart attacks, strokes, and other conditions caused or aggravated by alcohol.

One problem with the misnamed "non-alcoholic beer" is that **it does contain alcohol**. Reformed alcoholics, who must avoid alcohol completely or return to their former enslavement, may be tempted to think they can safely drink this brew. They can't.

The second problem is of even more concern to me. Those whom I have known who drank beer generally say the taste is not appealing at first. They had to work at acquiring a taste for it. Although the purveyors of death and disease deny it, this new product is an effort to develop the taste for beer in young children and in non-drinkers, so as to recruit them as consumers of the real beer.

In 2 Corinthians 2:11, Paul encourages us "to keep Satan from gaining the advantage over us; for we are not ignorant of his designs." Parents and young people, be warned! This is not Seven-Up in a dark bottle. It is the Devil's own product, cleverly disguised.

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The Seven Cardinal Virtues

The Seven Cardinal Virtues

By Johnny R. Melton*

The February 1992 issue of **Carolina Christian** was devoted to a study of the *Seven Deadly Sins*. That study, while admitting that any sin not covered by the blood of Jesus would be deadly, served to focus attention on the sinfulness so prevalent, not only in the world, but also in our lives.

The present issue of **Carolina Christian** will give attention to the *Seven Cardinal Virtues*. The list of virtues to be explored here does not come from a single passage of Scripture. As a matter of fact, the list was compiled by ancient theologians from the four essential virtues articulated by Plato and Aristotle—the so-called natural virtues: prudence (or, wisdom), justice, temperance, and fortitude (or, courage)—and the triad of theological virtues: faith, hope, and love (cf., 1 Cor. 13:13; 1 Thess. 1:2-3; Col. 1:3-5; Rom. 5:1-4; Heb. 10:22-24).

Augustine (d. 430), wrote concerning the relationship of the four virtues recognized in Greek philosophy and the three theological virtues that faith, hope, and love were the formative factors of Christian virtue and that wisdom, justice, temperance, and courage were but the different aspects in which the love of God manifests itself. For example, Augustine defined "fortitude as love cheerfully enduring all things for the sake of God; temperance, love keeping itself entire and inviolate for God; justice, love serving God only and therefore controlling all else that is subject to man; prudence, or wisdom, love discriminating between those things which assist and those things which retard its approach to God."

The need for a focus on virtue (moral excellence) is apparent to even the most casual observer of society. While there has been a good deal concerning written values, or the lack of them, in recent times, there is little consensus about how to proceed with instilling them in our children, or how to champion virtue in ourselves. Political correctness has apparently won the day, and we are paying an awful price for it.

When character and family values were raised as issues in the Presidential campaign last fall, James Caville, Bill Clinton's hard-hitting, pragmatic pol, responded with "It's the economy, stupid!" and the sad thing is, as far as the voting public was concerned, he was right.

Turning the public trust over to people who express disdain for character and family values may prove to be a costly mistake. Dr. Samuel Johnson once conversed with a gentleman who contended that there was no real difference between vice and virtue. Afterwards, the good Doctor remarked to his friend, Boswell, "But if he does really think that there is no distinction between virtue and vice, why, Sir, when he leaves our houses let us count our spoons."

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On Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, his "I Have a Dream" speech delivered on August 28, 1963, was aired, as part of a tribute to him, by National Public Radio. That speech must rank with FDR's following the bombing of Pearl Harbor as one of the most memorable in this century. I was impressed by Dr. King's eloquent use of both history and Scripture to call for the best in people. One line in that speech particularly struck me. King declared, "I have a dream that one day my four little children will be judged, not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." Sadly, we may be farther from that day now, than we were thirty years ago when the line was first delivered.

This issue of **Carolina Christian** makes an attempt to call us, not to political correctness, but to a biblical standard of excellence. In addition to the articles on each of the seven virtues, there is an article on "Virtue and Contending for the Faith" and another on "Virtue and the Family." If these articles remind us of the divine call to virtue, and if they serve to nudge us in that direction, then our labors will be rewarded and our prayers will have been answered.

*[*Guest Editor. Melton, Managing Editor since 1988, has served as Guest Editor of the February issue since 1975. Contact him at RR 2 Box 137, Conover, NC 28613-9609.]*

Wisdom

By Ross Thompson

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom..." (Psa. 111:10).

There is something about a mountain that changes your perspective. It cuts you down to size, reminds you of your frailty, and forces you to realize that you are not the center of the universe. On the cold granite heights this world and all its works shrink to insignificance. At the base, you scurry for a place in the ant heap. On the peak, in the thin crisp air, you touch the stars and tremble before the infinite.

The psalmist knew this when he sang these words: "I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth" (Psa. 121:1-2).

Yes, I am a creature: not a god. I am an insect who lives for a summer's day. The mountains will not remember me—and one day even they will erode. The mountains raise the question of eternity, but they offer no answers. I am overwhelmed by their effect upon me, but they offer no comfort.

Wisdom begins when the reality of this sinks in. Only then am I capable of discerning anything of importance. Only then can God enter my life. Without this realization, I allow the immediate concerns of life to crowd out the Ultimate Concern; I am a fool with a heart void of the reality of the divine.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...."

Yes, the beginning and the end. To live in awe of the presence of my Maker, to see Him in all of life's joys and troubles, to build all of life in reference to Him—this is wisdom and meaning. The psalmist sang of it; Jesus achieved it; Paul preached it.

The Old Testament uses the word "wisdom" in a number of senses. It can mean "learning," "skill," "instinct," or "discretion." It can be associated with knowledge, deftness, the migratory habits of birds, or the prudence of the merchant. It covers all of life's experience; even the most earthy. Yet the common denominator is that it means "getting things right"—grasping the essentials.

Our society has no problem with such worldly wisdom. We excel in our understanding of these areas. We revel in the mundane; we equate wisdom with prudence; we think that facts will save us. Our problem lies in our inability to grasp the realm of spirit. Yet, if we are devoid of spiritual intuition, what have we achieved? The world of flesh is passing away. The autonomous "secular" world is a mirage. In God, "we live and move and have our being'' (Acts 17:28). The wise stand in awe of Him. Spiritual insight is both the foundation and the essence of life.

When we lose touch with that ground, even the truth we find becomes false. Life is not just a matter of ''what,'' but of ''whom'' you know—and this is nowhere more true than in the Christian walk. Yet, even here, where the truth should be most obvious, it is easy to ''have a form of godliness but to deny the power'' and to put our trust solely in externals. Religion can be just as empty as irreligion—just as devoid of spirit.

''Is my life right?'' I ask, and then I seek some easy assurance. I turn inward and seek certainty in the belief that knowledge will save me; that some blueprint in my mind is the guarantee that I ''have it together,'' and that I know the passwords for the pearly gates. Or then again, I may trust in external organization or ritual as my guarantee.

Yet there is no security in such forms. The Corinthians were guilty of the former mistake, and the Galatians of the latter. Consequently, Paul sent the word ringing in the Corinthian's ears. ''Knowledge puffs up...'' (1 Cor. 8:1). ''The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know'' (1 Cor. 8:2). To the Galatians, he exposes Peter's superficial obsession with outward form, ''How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs'' (Gal. 2:14). He curses those who would substitute an outward form for grace, ''Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?'' (Gal. 3:2).

Then, as now, people wanted a way to put God in a box. However, no receptacle—intellectual or ritual—is sufficient. God doesn't box up very easily; and today, as much as any time in history, people need to know this God of awesome, mysterious, personal power. We live in a society drowning in information; a society which doubles its scientific knowledge every several years; a society which has a box for everything. No one has ever been as skillful as we in ''practical'' matters. Yet, we have no wisdom. Our knowledge is a mile wide but only half an inch deep. We are cunning—not wise.

In such environment, the last thing we need is more superficiality. If Christians are to spread the gospel, they need more than a slick information package and another blueprint. They need to restore sight to the spiritually blind, to expose the shallowness of the secular world, and to open hearts to the overwhelming reality of the God who creates and sustains the world. They must remember that faith does not ''rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power'' (1 Cor. 2:5).

''The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom....''

[Ross preaches for the Brooks Avenue Church in Raleigh. Contact him at 700 Brooks Ave. 27607.]

Be Courageous: God Is With Us

By Stanley N. Helton

''They call me Mother Courage 'cause I was afraid I'd be ruined, so I drove through the bombardment of Riga like a madwoman, with fifty loaves of bread in my cart. They were going moldy, what else could I do?'' (**Mother Courage and Her Children: A Chronicle of the Thirty Years' War**, translated by Eric Bentley [NY: Grove Press, 1955], 25). Thus Bertolt Brecht's character explains why she braved the battlefields of the Thirty Years' War. Courage for Mother Courage is born of necessity not conviction (after all the loaves are going moldy!). Also courage and fear ironically alternate when she says: ''They call me Mother Courage 'cause I was afraid...;'' wherever courage is, fear is not far behind. If courage is not the absence of fear, as we might think, what then is this idea we call courage? Christians naturally turn to the Bible to refine their understanding of courage.

In the Old Testament, two Hebrew words convey our idea. Both words occur in the poetic phrase ''Be strong and of good courage'' (Deut. 31:6,7,23; Josh. 1:6,7,9,18; 10:25; 1 Chron.

22:13; 28:20; 2 Chron. 32:7 and Dan. 10:19). The Old Testament writers are not suggesting that we reach within ourselves to find some hidden inner strength or intestinal fortitude (colloquially, guts). A comparison of the passages listed above shows consistently the basis for courage: God is with us. Three passages illustrate this well.

"Be strong and bold...because it is the LORD your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you" (Deut. 31:6; cf. Heb. 13:5,6; citations are from the NRSV unless otherwise stated).

"Then the LORD commissioned Joshua son of Nun and said, 'Be strong and bold...I will be with you'" (Deut. 31:23).

"I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go" (Josh. 1:9).

In the last verse the admonition not to be afraid doesn't mean that we dispel all fear before we act courageously; fear is a natural human response to anything we perceive to be threatening. Despite our fear, courage is available to us because God is available to us. I can have courage when I know God is with me. Now to balance something I have already said, there is a sense in which courage does come from within: from "His Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor. 1:22; see 1 Cor. 6:19 and Phil. 2:13 for similar ideas), but still it is not *our* courage, but courage that comes from knowing God is near.

The New Testament uses four words to carry the idea of courage. For your reference, they are (1) **tharsé**, also spelled **tharré**, (2) **euthumé**, (3) **andrízomai**, but the most prevalent is (4) **parrsiázomai** and cognates. Here are some instances of each.

(1) As Jesus walked on the choppy Sea of Galilee, he cried out in the darkness to His shuddering disciples, "Be courageous—I AM; don't be afraid" (Matt. 14:27, my translation, SNH). While Jesus' "I AM" may mean merely, "I am here," or "It is I," it could be a deliberate attempt on His part to remind the disciples that they were in the presence of God—something Peter forgot when he took his eyes off Jesus.

(2) The second word expresses the idea of "being cheerful" (occurring in Acts 27:22,25,36 and James 5:13). When the sailors wanted to abandon the ship that was to carry Paul to Rome, he encouraged them to "keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God..." (Acts 27:21-25). Paul urged the crew to have courage because God had made His presence known to him the night before. Again, courage based on God's presence is a consistent theme in the Bible.

(3) **Andrízomai**, occurring only in 1 Cor. 16:13, means to "be a man," or "act like a man." It also occurs in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, written sometime after A.D. 156. When Polycarp stepped into the arena where he would die, the story relates that "a voice came from heaven, 'Be strong, Polycarp, and *be a man.*' And no one saw who had spoken but our own [the Christians] who were there heard the voice" (my translation, SNH). Polycarp bravely admits, "I am a Christian," though he knows that death is the reward for his confession. He can face death because he believes God is with him. If you would like to read the whole account, see **Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers**, translated by Maxwell Staniforth (New York: Penguin Books, 1968, 151-167.)

(4) Our last word (usually translated, "boldness," or "with boldness"), occurs about forty times in the New Testament. Luke, in the book of Acts, favors it in describing the boldness expressed by the early Christians in proclaiming the Gospel (Acts 2:29; 4:13,29,31; 9:27,28; 13:46; 14:3; 18:26; 19:8; 26:26; 28:31). After the Jewish authorities released Peter and John, the apostles prayed with their group, "...grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness." Soon God made His presence known to everyone in the room: "When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness" (4:29,31). That courage comes from the Holy Spirit (God's presence) runs throughout the book of Acts, which ends with Paul in Rome, "preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things about the Lord Jesus Christ with great boldness without interference" (my translation, SNH).

For Christians, nothing is more impressive than the example of Jesus Himself. Jesus exemplified courage—though no word for courage occurs—when He faced the tempter after His forty-day fast in the wilderness. His baptism had left Him with an unresolved conflict: God had spoken from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." These words fused conflicting images (from Psa. 2:7 and Isa. 42:1) of what the Messiah should be: King or Servant? Each time Satan began, "If you are the son of God..." he tempted Jesus to be king now without the pain of being a servant. In the Old Testament "son of God" was a way to say "king" (see Psa. 2 and 2 Sam. 7:12-17). The first temptation focused on the king's ability to provide for his people; the second, a spectacle that would entice people to follow him; and the third, the ultimate prize for any king. We underestimate the courage needed in this encounter if we don't view the temptation as real: Jesus could have chosen the wrong path. Thank God, Jesus became King by becoming a Servant! If the presence of God, His Holy Spirit, was with Jesus at the beginning of the forty days, God reconfirmed His presence following the temptation: "...suddenly angels came and waited on Him" (Matt. 4:11).

Courage, then, is not the absence of fear, but confident action coming from the assurance that God is with us. Perhaps it's more than coincidental, then, that we en**courage** one another when we assemble (Heb. 10:24,25).

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Justice

By Tim Sensing

Christians are to gather their understanding of justice based upon the character of God, who is uniquely just (righteous). "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed" (Rev. 15:3-4; cf. Neh. 9:33; Psa. 7:9; Isa. 45:21; Zeph. 3:5). It is unthinkable that God would pervert justice (Job 8:3). Since God's justice remains eternally bound to His mercy, God's justice is not shaken when a sinner is forgiven (Rom. 3:5; 1 John 1:9).

A definition of justice is dependent upon one's view of God, the community's covenant relationship with God, and the responsibility of the people of God in covenant to respond to human need. Two operational definitions of justice are found in scripture: (1) Compensatory Justice—people receiving the rewards and punishments that they deserve, no more and no less. God is a righteous judge who punishes the wicked and rewards the righteous. (2) Communitarian Justice—people receiving what they need to be accepted as participants in community. God's intention is that all be included in covenant community. This justice is proactive— passionately seeking out wrong and trying to make it right. It is dedicated to other people's needs and especially to the needs of those less able to care for themselves. Sharing with others what God has done for us is not just strong sentiment but seen in determined action.

Old Testament Understanding

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God established his covenant with Israel at Sinai. He demanded their religious loyalty and insisted on social justice as part of the covenant. In Leviticus 19, based on the holiness of His own character, God gave them an ethic for community which included not stealing, not coveting, safeguarding the neighbor's property, not bearing false witness in court against a neighbor, taking responsibility for the poor, and not perverting justice. That ethic reached its consummate rendering in verse 18, "Love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord." This ethic also went beyond community boundaries to include all people (Lev. 19:9-10; 33-34).

Justice is the practice of what is right and good (Psa. 82; Prov. 21:3). We speak of "getting justice." The Old Testament speaks of "doing justice." Since our relationship with one another is based upon our relationship with God, we know what is right and good by imitating His action toward us. Micah 6:8 asks the question, "What does the Lord require of you?" This is the same question as, "What is good?" By God requiring His people "to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God," God's goodness is demonstrated in community. Who God is, for example, affects our daily use of balances and weights (Lev. 19:36; Prov. 11:1).

The most extensive treatment on justice in the Old Testament is found in the prophetic messages of Amos. John Willis summarizes Amos's view this way: "Amos believed that social problems were religious problems. He was convinced that God is deeply concerned when the poor are mistreated, neglected and cheated. And so he preached that God's people should act. He illustrated the point by noting that men do not ride horses on rocky ground because this would hurt them, and men do not plow the Mediterranean Sea with oxen because this would be useless and destructive; but God's people do the unnatural, illogical, unthinkable thing: they turn justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood (Amos 6:12)." (John T. Willis, **My Servants the Prophets**, The Way of Life Series [Biblical Research Press, 1971]: 60)

Willis went on to talk about how one cannot "substitute an hour of worship for a week of righteous living." The rich were religious. They believed they were seeking God. But Amos told them to quit seeking God at the place of worship and begin seeking the good.

In other words, Amos preached that "religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world" (James 1:27). God does not accept the external worship of those who do not deal justly and righteously with their fellow men. Particularly with the poor and needy (5:24). (Willis)

In ***Leaven***, an issue devoted to the detailed analysis of the proper role of social justice within the church entitled: *"Proclaiming the Acceptable Year of the Lord: Ministry to the Poor,"* Stuart Love, gives a detailed analysis of the social environment and the crimes which define Judah's and Israel's breach of justice and righteousness. He concludes by summarizing these "theological imperatives, themes and principles found in the prophets: (1) The Lord actively cares for the poor; (2) The poor often are upright persons who have been treated unjustly; (3) Poverty is a human problem often caused by greed and covetousness; (5) God's people cannot be indifferent to the needs of the poor; (6) God's people cannot actively participate in nor passively sanction the oppression of the poor; (7) God's people are called to do justice and to love righteousness; (8) The institutional structures of religion and worship may deceptively reinforce the conditions of poverty." ("Failing To Do Justice: The Quandary of the Poor in Eighth Century Israel and Judah," ***Leaven*** 1 [Spring 1990]: 11-17. See also, Mark Love, "Blessed are the Meek: The Land and Economic Justice," ***Leaven*** 1 [Spring 1990]: 22-26; and Donald Gowan, "Wealth and Poverty in the Old Testament," ***Interpretation*** 41 [October 1987]: 341-53)

New Testament Example: Matthew 20:1-16

In the context of the passage, this parable follows on the heels of the question of Peter in Matthew 19:27. The disciples were expecting something special because they were the ones who were following Jesus first. They wanted reward for their sacrifices. Matthew also follows the parable with the request of James and John's mother in Matthew 20:20-28. This did not exclude Pharisees or the crowds in the audience for the rich young man was mentioned in Matthew 19:16 and little children in Matthew 19:13.

As the story developed, the landowner stated that he would pay whatever was right to the second group. Most would think this meant a fair fraction of the original amount. Hiring the last workers for one hour was not common practice. He hired them based on their plight rather than their usefulness.

The tension between the full-day workers and the landowner developed even before it was explicitly stated. At first, there would be wonder in verse 9 at the payment of a denarius to the last workers by the audience. The owner's generosity was seen by his giving the amount necessary for the sustaining of one's family even though it was beyond the expected. The first workers must have felt a sense of joyous anticipation. That feeling was quickly replaced by shock. They saw this as a threat to their understanding of fairness. They wanted an application of the merit system (equality of exchange). Reward should be exactly proportionate to achievement. They felt they deserved the reward. They did not think he should be stingy to the others but that they should be given a bonus for enduring the heat of the whole day.

The equality of exchange system operates today. If you work shorter hours, you get less pay. If you work longer hours, you get overtime. If one hour is equal to one denarius, then twelve hours is equal to twelve denarii. The first hired were angry and rightfully so. What seemed to be generous was now arbitrary. How can one hour of easy work be equal to twelve hours of hard, hot work? Where is the justice for the conscientious, the faithful, the hard working? Where is consistency and dependability if rewards are issued arbitrarily? How will the master respond? Surely, he will see and do right by responding generously to the first workers. The landowner would then illustrate God's gracious generosity. But God does not respond as man would expect.

The landowner's response was clear and firm. He acted justly. He had the right to do with his money as he saw fit. His goodness was at no one's expense. How can you grumble against goodness? It is because of their own jealousy, envy and self-centeredness. He acted with perfect justice with some and paid the agreed upon amount. With others, he acted with compassion by giving what was necessary for a family's daily needs. Grumbling only occurs when you compare blessings. If you keep your eye focused on God's blessings and not on what your neighbor gets (keeping records for God), then you will rejoice with the generosity of the owner.

The legalistic understanding of existence by the full-day workers caused them to be expelled with the words, ''Take your pay and go.'' They ended up being estranged from the source of grace. God does not behave in expected ways. He does not deal with men by the principles of equality of exchange (eye for an eye), but by grace. If he did, who then could be saved? A person can only accept the grace of God when he is willing to accept the reality of a different perspective. As long as we insist on the equality of exchange, we will not be able to accept grace. This is what the kingdom is like.

The parable does not give a conclusion. Did the workers take their denarius and go home mad? Or did they repent? Then the maxim is added, ''So the last will be first, and the first will be last.'' This statement is not intended to talk about order of salvation, the rank of disciples, or the reversal of that rank. The parable gives meaning to the phrase and is proverbial for the equality of God's grace being given to all without partiality. At this time the disciples needed to hear this message. They, too, reflected the merit system. They wanted to push aside the children in Matthew 19:13-15. They did not comprehend the interaction between the rich young man and Jesus. They wanted to sit at the right and left of Jesus in Matthew 20:20-28. The Pharisees also had problems with Jesus accepting sinners (Matt. 11:19). Those mentioned in Matthew 19:13-15; 20:29-34; 21:14-16; and 21:28-32 were all in the kingdom due to compassion. They wanted to kill Him for this type of parable (Matt. 21:45-46). Yet, it was the disciples in this case who had problems accepting God's rationale for grace. They were hard pressed to accept a grace that would require Jesus' death (Matt. 20:17-19). Their understanding of justice and mercy was still not yet transformed by the gospel. (Another New Testament example is: Dean Smith, ''Salvation Has

Come: The Transformation of Zacchaeus." *Leaven* 1 [Spring 1990]: 18-21.)

Love concludes his article: "Finally, the prophets in their own words remind us of the conceptual standards which should guide our understanding and behavior today."

He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8).

Learn to do good; seek justice correct oppression defend the fatherless, plead for the widow (Isa. 1:17).

Hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for your God (Hosea 12:6).

But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an overflowing stream (Amos 5:24).

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Temperance

By Bruce Thweatt

The word evokes images of Carrie Nation taking an ax to the door of the saloon. Of course, temperance as Peter used it has quite a different meaning from the single application of the "Temperance Crusade." The extreme tactics of Carrie Nation were contradictory to the full definition of temperance. It is a word that calls for much more than mere abstinence from alcohol, but rather it describes the life that is lived without excess, lived under control, a life which is not enslaved by extremes. Most English dictionaries offer four basic usages of the word temperance, only one of them being abstinence from alcoholic beverages. The other three agree that temperance represents the use of self-control, moderation, and self-restraint in all areas of life. When we think about temperance as a Christian quality, we must think of the quality of self-control that Christians must demonstrate in all areas of life. When Peter instructed us to add "to knowledge temperance" (2 Pet. 1:6), he teaches us to use the qualities of moderation and self-control. Where the King James Version reads temperance, the newer translations all read self-control, which is the foundation of all Christian living.

It is obvious why Peter put knowledge first—you can't control yourself if you don't know what needs to be controlled. Peter's own struggle for self-control and moderation is well-documented in the Bible. Peter's impulsive defense in the garden caused Jesus to command him to put away his sword in John 18:11. Just a few minutes later, this same Peter denied that he even knew Jesus. When Peter tells us that we need to learn self-control, it is painful personal experience that we are hearing. That makes Peter's observation so much more encouraging when he says, "if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:8). Our job is to learn self-control, to increase our self-control as we seek to be more like Christ in our daily living. This is truly the cutting edge of faith that lives, the point where faith and knowledge become real, when faith becomes the action that we choose for ourselves.

It is in exercising self-control that we come to freedom in Christ, the freedom from sin that Peter struggled with just as we struggle today. There is great irony in the current definition of freedom being used in our society today. Freedom is defined as having the right to choose what you want in any and all circumstances without the fear that any outside power can pass judgment on your choice. This makes self-control unnecessary. It has always been unpopular. When Paul told Felix about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and sent Paul away (Acts 24:25). It is still the same today. Self-control is not a popular answer when people expect to do whatever they wish without having consequences to pay, but it is still the only way to be free in Christ. Paul calls self-control a "fruit of the Spirit'' (Gal. 5:23). We are called out of the world and into Christ and one of the visible proofs that we show is our self-control. Every time we choose to act righteously, we demonstrate the freedom from sin which Christ died to give us. Whenever we reject sin as the way that we live and think, we show the freedom that we have in Christ. No one can be forced to be righteous, they must choose to be. Freedom must be chosen, it cannot be inherited or purchased for another.

Self-control is the only way to experience freedom. If you do what you choose to do, you are free. Peter said that ''by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved'' (2 Pet. 2:19). Jesus said, ''everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin'' (John 8:34). If we live in sin, not choosing what is Godly, but only satisfying ourselves, then we are enslaved to sin, we serve sin. But if we live under control, choosing what is good, showing our desire to do what pleases God, we show the victory of Jesus over sin in our lives. Paul tells us that grace frees us from sin in Romans 6:14-18: ''For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.'' The key word here is obedience, which is always a choice, a decision to take the action pleasing to another. Paul emphasizes this by saying you were ''obedient from the heart,'' a phrase which clearly shows the choice with which the Romans responded to God was self-directed. From the heart, we choose what we most desire. Let us choose what our heart desires most, but let us follow Peter's example and teaching and set our hearts on God, which is faith; turn our minds to knowing Christ, which is knowledge; and demonstrate the freedom of our faith in our self-control as we choose to be obedient to God in all things. Then we ''shall be neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.''

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Faith

By Dennis Conner

A good friend jokingly rebukes the cheap grace mentality of many religious folks by quipping, ''I'd rather be saved than be a Christian any day!'' Though intended as humor, the statement fits today's ''something for nothing'' religion like a glove. There are a lot of folks today who just want to enjoy all the perks of salvation without sharing any of the responsibilities. ''I'll take all that God has to offer, but give little or nothing in return.'' Well, Peter would have little patience for such an obviously shallow understanding of salvation by grace through faith, and we see this in 2 Peter 1:2-7.

Peter opens the letter by saying that we have been given all that pertains to life and godliness. The God of exceedingly great and precious promises has made us to partake of His own divine nature, having taken us out of the depravity of the world. In other words, God has saved us. As wonderful as our salvation may be, however, it is not an end in itself. It is not simply perks; it is also responsibility. As Cary Weisiger III has correctly observed, ''The great

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end of salvation is conformity to the character of God.... The practical aim of this passage is soul culture.'' Once spiritually reborn, we must spiritually grow.

Necessary to the whole process of salvation is faith. By faith we are saved (vv. 1-4), and by faith we grow (v. 5, ''...giving all diligence, add to your faith...''). It is faith's relationship to the growth process that we want focus on at this point.

It is entirely by design that Peter writes ''add to your faith....'' The fruitful life the apostle pictures in this text finds its root in the fertile soil of faith. Faith is where it should be in this catalog of virtues—first. Without faith there is nothing else. Without faith the spiritual life is not simply barren or unfruitful. It is dead.

But what kind of faith is Peter talking about? To begin with, it is not a faith of my own doing. Peter is writing to those ''who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.'' Yes, we are the ones who do the believing; God does not do that for us. Yet, it is God through Christ who has made it possible for us to believe. There is nothing meritorious in our faith. Second, it is an obedient faith in that it has answered the call of God. Further, it is a trusting faith in that it embraces and clings to the God of promise. And finally, it is a responsible faith, striving to become what God has predestined us to become and to do what He has willed.

Trusting, submissive, responsible faith is the stem of which are born the fruits of righteousness. Is this your faith?

[PO Box 1219, Yadkinville, NC 27055]

"Oh, I Hope So!"

By David Leach

I caught Julia staring at the plastic grass that covered the church building's porch. Sixtyish, slim, dignified-looking I'd always thought, a long-time Christian, and hardly the chatty type; today she seemed unusually preoccupied by the world's weight. Normally, I don't intrude into others's sad spaces, even if I perceive they want to be bothered. I usually don't know what to say.

Not this time. For some dumb reason I thought, ''I'm a minister, and we're supposed to offer helpful insights at moments like these.'' So I gathered up courage and barged in where angels wouldn't get caught dead.

Words way-too-corny flipped from my lips. ''Smile, you're going to heaven!'' I chirped, sounding shallow even to myself, but knowing the sentiment *should* cheer any Christian. So I braced myself for THAT LOOK of shock and annoyance I've so often seen when I've said the wrong thing at the wrong time.

I got a look all right. But not the kind intended to blow me off. One of...terror.

Then her face became even sadder looking than when I first found her. ''Oh, I hope so,'' she whimpered, like a mother just told her son had a remote chance of surviving the operation.

What a backfire. Not the intrusion, the *words* themselves hurt her. Instead of inspiring her awareness of wonderful possibilities, I had inadvertently deepened her sense of dread. Whatever hope might have been dormant in her soul was going to stay there, dead.

Brands of Hope

Hope comes in various shapes. ''I hope to win the Reader's Digest Sweepstakes'' is a very different notion from ''I hope we'll have a good time at the party.'' A third brand of hope is, ''I hope to see the Braves play Tuesday night.''

The first is merely *wishful thinking*. With infinitesimal odds of winning, you spend your 29¢ on a stamp, then forget it. You don't get new loans, hire an architect for your new home, or call your travel agent about good deals to Hawaii. Maybe nurse a fantasy now and then, but your lifestyle doesn't essentially change. This kind of hope doesn't really expect anything, let alone *depend* on something.

The second kind of hope might be called a *sensible probability*. Your comfort mostly depends on external factors over which you have limited control, so you won't know until you get to the party (if you finally get there). You have reason to believe you'll have a good time. After all, you're generally a get-along guy, and you do know a few of the folks that are supposed to attend. The possibilities are generally good, enough to make a commitment to attend the party, but you can't help but feel a little "iffy" about the whole thing. If a better offer came along, you just might seriously construct your excuses to Offer Number One. Though this kind of hope may change your lifestyle, it will likely make you crazier, because you're constantly vacillating, wondering whether you're doing the right thing.

The third kind of hope is a *realistic expectation*, a *plan*. You have every reason to believe you are going to that ball game because you've taken all the necessary measures. You've bought the tickets, cleared your calendar, excited your kids, and reminded everyone at the office until they're sick of hearing it. Only some giant external problem out of your control, or an even less probable change of your mind, could keep you from attending. You're depending on this hope to deliver, and it's shaping the way your time is used.

What God offers through Christ is hope of the third kind, realistic expectation. Because of Christ's death, the barriers separating us from God have fallen, and justification before Him is secured (Rom. 5:1-11). God, not ourselves, is the one guaranteeing that salvation, so we can have a hope that is "a sure and steadfast anchor for the soul" (Heb. 6:17-19). Waiting for us is "an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for [us]" (1 Pet. 1:3,4). Salvation is not a matter of wishful thinking that luck will effect. Nor is it merely a sensible probability dependant on our righteousness or the unpredictable behavior of a self-absorbed God, the fear I think Julia harbored. Eternity with God is something for the Christian to plan on, because control of the situation is in the hands of the loving God of creation and the cross.

Hope and Steroids

Hope is both object and the process of trying to attain that object. Hope (a noun) is like the carrot in front of the donkey, and the process (a verb) of trying to get the carrot. We will always point our lives in the direction of our carrots—they are what motivate us. How we live our lives demonstrates what we believe to be attainable, worthwhile goals. Here is where our faith is revealed. What do we really believe in? It shows in the way we live; that is, it shows in the way we hope.

In Romans 8:18-25, the Apostle Paul describes what hope does in the life of the Christian.

- It *waits* (vv. 19,23,25). Hoping in Christ means we have "already" received assurances of our salvation (like the Holy Spirit, Rom. 5:5), but have "not yet" realized them in their full glory. Waiting is the only choice of mortals.
- It waits *expectantly* (vv. 19-23) knowing that all of creation has been "groaning" for a day of liberation and redemption. For the Christian, it's just a matter of time; not whether, but when.
- It waits *eagerly* (v. 23) and *patiently* (v. 25). While this may at first seem paradoxical, combined, these two attributes capture the essence of the virtue of hope. Imagine hoping for anything of value that didn't require both virtues simultaneously. From selling a house to becoming a great athlete, waiting for the end result demands optimism tempered by longsuffering. Without optimism, you lose motivation. Without patience you start dropping the price too quickly and taking steroids. A lifestyle that regresses into materialism, immorality, or some other form of idolatry is a sign patience has worn thin or eternal expectations are being replaced by shorter-term hopes for happiness.

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•Hope also waits *joyfully* (Rom. 5:2), because the collective experiences of life keep being interpreted as pointing toward the ultimate hope of salvation. It behaves *boldly* (2 Cor. 3:12), because the believer knows God is there to support, even after mistakes.

Our lives in Christ might well be compared to a fire. Faith keeps the fire burning. Love is the warmth and light received from it. Hope is the flame itself, burning inside us, keeping us alive. An insecure faith that can only wishfully say, "Oh, I hope I'll be saved," produces lives without fire. But for those who learn they cannot save themselves and instead can "hope in the Lord," they "will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint" (Isa. 40:31).

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Love

By Ernie Thigpen

When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in Him. If God has been glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself and will glorify Him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, Where I am going, you cannot come. I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:31-35).

Love today is often the problem rather than the solution. People fall in and out of love, but who understands it? Yet it was Jesus who said, "Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." Jesus said, "Love." What a slippery word He used.

Many marriages today amount to little more than well defined, toughly negotiated business contracts. His time playing golf is weighed against her time with the girls. Her numerous pilgrimages to see family are balanced opposite his weekly Saturday afternoon through Monday night football-on-television ritual. If he and she each get some of what they want most then the marriage must be working. In this "every person for himself" arena, we quickly discover that the opposite of love is not hate, but indifference.

There was once a TV documentary about a tribe of humans in some far away place who based their lives on indifference. If a man ran out of food and began to starve, he could expect little, if any, help from anyone else, not even his mate. Mothers nursed their children for three years only to then put them out to fend for themselves, not seeming to care if they lived or died. The people were apathetic and dull, only concerned about their next meal. Yes, the opposite of love is indifference.

Yet we still hear Jesus' instruction, "Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." So we preach the height, depth, and boundlessness of God's love. And we remind Christians that Jesus teaches us that while we may be choosy in our emotions, we do not have permission to be discriminating in our compassion. "Jesus," we admonish the worshippers, "did not invite you to love other people. He issued you an order."

Monday morning, with such a sermon still fresh in my mind, I see two strangers heading for the front door of the church office. Behind them I see a dilapidated Dodge filled to overflowing with two or three kids whose heads are poking out the window. I know the story before I hear it. The family is on their way to a new place where he'll assure me he has a job offer. But they've run out of money and they've run out of gas and the kids haven't eaten since yesterday morning. My first instinct...head for the safety of my office, quickly turn on some Christian music so loudly I can't (won't) hear the knocking. Or, if I think about it, I can do something really important. I can listen to yesterday's sermon tape. Reviewing sermon tapes is always good for improvement in delivery. But, there are those words again, ''Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.'' Why did I have to preach on that?

Sadly, those who may need the most love are those who are least lovable. Perhaps that's why Jesus issued a command rather than offer a suggestion. ''Lovable'' is many times synonymous with ''successful.'' Throw together most if not all of the following ingredients: popularity, power, personality, and possessions. Add a healthy measure of good looks, great physique, and gracious friends, then you are lovable. How can I help but love someone like that?

But Jesus isn't talking about the emotion of feeling attracted to someone. He is talking about the choice. I have to make a conscious choice regarding how I will relate to others in this world. Will I relate in indifference or will I act in love? And Jesus gave us that command.

Yet if Jesus had given us nothing more than a command, people would have put Him in a museum long ago. Who needs someone saying, ''Behave yourself because you ought to behave yourself.'' Jesus did not build His church on that foundation. We obey because we love Him (1 John 5:3). ''We love Him because He first loved us'' (1 John 4:19). ''No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends'' (John 15:13). ''But God proves His love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us'' (Romans 5:8). And it was this very same Christ who taught us to choose to act toward others in love in the same way that He chose to act toward us in love.

Love is the prisoner in the concentration camp giving away his last piece of bread. ''Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.''

Love is the classroom of twelve year old boys who, upon learning that one of their classmates would lose his hair as he took treatment for the cancer that was slowly taking his life, shaved their heads. ''We didn't want him to stick out so other kids would look at him or make fun of him or stay away from him'' (USA Today, December 4, 1992). ''Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.''

Love is Edith Taylor. She received a devastating letter from her husband, Carl, who was overseas in the military. ''I've been to Mexico and gotten us a divorce,'' he wrote. He did this to marry a nineteen year old Japanese girl he had met named Aiko. Edith, who was forty-eight at the time, was devastated.

Five years later, she received another letter from Carl. ''I'm dying of lung cancer. Aiko and I have two daughters. Aiko has no family to go back to in Japan. What will ever become of them?'' Edith had a decision to make. After learning of Carl's death, she wrote Aiko and invited her and her daughters to come live with her in Massachusetts.

I struggle to open the door to give away some food. I struggle to love those just a little different from me. Edith Taylor opened her home to the woman who had taken her husband from her. Several years later she officially adopted Aiko as well as her children. She could have become bitter and resentful, but she chose to go on loving others as Christ loved her.

Is there any chance of me loving like that? Is there any hope for any of us if we don't love like that? What were those words again? Oh yes, I remember. ''Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.''

''Love.'' We must understand that Jesus' kind of love is the solution to the problems of life. ''Love.'' Don't just fall in and out of it. Choose to love. ''Love.'' Don't let it be just a word that slips through our fingers. Grasp hold of Christ. He is Living Love.

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Virtue and Family

By Jim Denison

A little boy came to his father and asked him, "Dad, who made God?" The father, engrossed in the evening paper, responded, "Beats me, son." The little boy would not be put off. "Dad, why is the earth round?" The dad answered, "I don't know son," The boy played for a minute, then asked, "Dad, is there life on planets?" The father patiently answered, "Nobody knows the answer to that." Finally the boy asked his father, "Dad, do you mind me asking you all these questions?" The father put down his paper, "Why not at all, son," he said, "how else are you going to learn?"

Now that's funny! As a dad with a six-year-old girl, I can relate to the dichotomy of being a father who wants his children to learn the answers to life's curious questions, but who also must feign ignorance when it comes to responding correctly to those "why-is-the-sky-blue" kind of questions.

Kids not only look to their parents for answers to the "what-makes-water-wet" questions, but also for answers to weightier questions concerning values and how to live meaningfully. They want to learn a foundation for living that equips them to handle not only decisions about what is right and wrong, but also enables them to make those choices between what is good, better and best. And the answers to these important questions are discovered primarily through observing the life of another. Our kids may not always verbalize these value-related questions, but they are constantly asking them. The answers they find are found typically in the examples they see.

I think that's true in instilling the concept of Christian virtue in our families. Yes, the Bible says much about virtuous qualities every person who loves God should long to possess, but cardinal virtues—wisdom, courage, justice, temperance, faith, hope, and love—are best learned by observation and imitation. How absurd it is for parents to tell their children, "Be virtuous, be good, be all that God wants you to be," without demonstrating those qualities themselves. Family members learn these traits by observing each other's behavior and by first-hand experience.

Jesus provides a wonderful illustration of this very idea. He said to His disciples, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another...." That's certainly a textbook truth of what He wanted His disciples to do. However, His disciples needed more than black-and-white instructions. And so Jesus continued, "...as I have loved you" (John 13:34, NKJV). Now that was something they could understand since they had seen and experienced first-hand the love of Christ.

Children are a lot like sponges. Sponges are animals that live in the sea, so divers must descend to the ocean floor to gather them. After they are brought to the surface and all the living matter is removed, the "skeleton" with its open-celled structure has an amazing capacity to soak up liquids. Like sponges, children quietly take in everything around them. They are what they are not only because of inherited family traits, but also because they are continually influenced by their environment. For this reason, parents must be concerned about what is allowed to fill their children's minds. How important it is to exercise wise control over our children's surroundings! How vital it is for parents to model cardinal virtues for their kids! The children will always get the message by what they see.

The power of example—whether good or bad—is overwhelming. The following story makes this clear. One day when Junior was age 14 he noticed his father wearing a happy grin as he came home from work. "Got pinched for speeding, but Jake down at City Hall got the ticket fixed for me," the father said.

When Junior was age 15, he was with his mother in the family car when she backed into a tree, doing extensive damage. "We'll say someone rammed us when we were parked downtown," she said. "Then we'll collect the insurance for it."

When the boy was 16, he listened to his grandfather reminiscing about the "good old days of rationing" when he made $100,000 black-marketing cars. That same night Uncle John was bragging that in his business he sent no bills and received only cash. "Why be a sucker and let the Internal Revenue Service get all my money?'' he asked.

When Junior turned 18 years old, his family pulled every possible string to get a scholarship to an Ivy League school. They even lied about the family income to make it seem that their son needed financial aid. When he had a rough time academically, he bought the answers to a calculus exam from an upper-classman. Junior was caught and expelled.

When he returned home, his mother burst into hysterical weeping over the disgrace he had caused. ''How could you have done this to us?'' she sobbed. ''This isn't the way we raised you.'' Of course, she failed to realize that weekday practices speak louder than Sunday platitudes. They had lived a lie and Junior got the message!

Virtue means ''moral excellence.'' The home is the seedbed from which springs personal piety, devotion to God and moral excellence. Virtue, as the Bible uses the word, is more than a good idea—it's a superior ability. A form of the original word was used to denote someone who was a patron of the dramatic arts to the extent that he would lavishly and willingly pour out everything that was necessary for a noble performance. This person would ensure that every piece of equipment needed for the drama was generously supplied and every actor liberally cared for so that the finest performance possible could be given.

Likewise, teaching of cardinal Christian virtues must be lavishly and willingly supplied to each of the little actors we shelter in our homes. God has ordained that parents serve as producers and directors in modeling moral excellence to their families. The kids are always listening to mom and dad to learn their lines and watching for their cues in making the right choices in the drama of live.

By the way, why is the world round?

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Virtue and Jude 3

By Ron Newberry

The epistle of Jude, seldom read and little understood, has been labeled ''a trumpet call to defend the faith.'' A sense of urgency leaps from the opening words of the writer. His original intent was to write about their common salvation and encourage his readers. However, he learned that they were in danger from teachers who perverted the faith. They had distorted grace turning it into a license to sin (v. 4). They had denied Jesus Christ (v. 4) and slandered celestial beings (v. 8).

Jude addresses the need of the hour by warning these Christians to be on guard against subversive teachers who had infiltrated their community. However, he does not suggest that they defend the truth from a passive position. He tells them to take the initiative. The best defense, he implies, is a strong, assertive, dynamic offense (v. 3).

The word used in Jude 3 translated *contend* is **epagonizomai**. The root word is the word we translate as *agony*. The prefix **epi** is used to intensify the meaning of this root word. Therefore, Jude is encouraging his readers to strive with a great deal of energy and urgency against teachings which will undermine their faith.

The purpose of this article is not to explore the issues threatening these Christians. It is not to try to define what Jude means by ''the faith.'' It is assumed that he means the body of doctrine entrusted by God to the apostles which they in turn delivered to man and which remains unchangeable in nature. This is not intended to imply that such a search for the core issues of ''the faith'' is not needed. In fact, it is imperative that we separate the traditions of ''the faith'' from the traditions of men in order to contend earnestly for the appropriate issues.

This defense of ''the faith'' is not relegated to a few professionals. It is not the exclusive domain of university professors or local elders or editors of journals. It is the duty and responsibility of every generation of Christians to maintain the purity of the stream of doctrine handed down to them and to protect it from being polluted by any tributary of traditions of men regardless whomever those men might be.

One of today's important concerns is this: How can we contend for the faith without becoming contentious? Other articles in this special edition of **Carolina Christian** seek to illuminate the specifics concerning the *Seven Cardinal Virtues*. Taken as a whole, I believe they will propel us in the right direction when it comes to contending for the faith and they will assist us in not developing a contentious spirit. Obviously there is not enough space in this article to examine in depth each of these virtues. Please read the other articles and consider the following thoughts concerning contending for the faith and the *Seven Cardinal Virtues*.

First, consider the word **wisdom**. The ancient Greeks had three different words to describe what we mean by wisdom. They represent three qualities of the mind or three levels of awareness which, if combined in the same mind, produce a mind properly equipped. One term basically deals with the ultimate truths of God. The second word is the more practical aspect of wisdom which we might call prudence. The third term relates to understanding or evaluation. Obviously, anyone interested in contending for the faith must have a knowledge of God's truths, how to apply those truths to life, and the ability to use wise judgment.

The second virtue is **courage**. It is the antonym of fear. It means to have a degree of fearlessness and confidence. Certainly anyone determined to contend for the faith must possess confidence in that for which he contends and he must not be afraid to stand up for truth.

Justice is the third virtue. It means basically to determine something in a righteous manner, to behave in a way consistent with what is right. How can anyone claim to be contending for the faith without first possessing a spirit of fairness and justice?

The next virtue is **temperance**. Perhaps self-control better communicates the meaning of the word temperance. One contending for the faith must exhibit self-control remembering that what is at stake is greater than his personal beliefs and larger than his ego.

Faith, the fifth virtue, means trust or convictions. It seems axiomatic that to contend properly for the faith one must have trust and confidence in what one strives to defend with vigor and energy. One not absolutely committed to the veracity of the faith will make a poor contender for that faith.

The next virtue is **hope**. Hope can best be thought of as confidence in the future. It is an optimistic outlook on life. One filled with hope is not hesitant to claim what God promises as truth. To contend for the faith properly, one must be confident that God indeed is in control of this universe. If that be true, then how can we have anything but an optimistic view of life?

The final virtue is **love**. There are so many nuances to our word love. In its various forms it can mean anything from love of family to love of friends. It can also mean a decision of the mind which makes us determined to sacrifice whatever it takes to promote the best interest of another person. It certainly follows that anyone dedicated to the faith and willing to contend for that faith must possess a love for that faith that transcends any personal agenda.

With that brief outline of these seven virtues, and a sketch of Jude's meaning behind the term *contend* in mind, how can we apply the seven virtues to a proper contending for the faith? That is, how can we contend for the doctrines of God without becoming contentious? After all, one of the doctrines we are called to defend is to not quarrel, wrangle and present a contentious spirit (1 Cor. 1:11). The elders are to be peaceable (1 Tim. 3:3) which is the opposite of a quarrelsome, combative spirit. The Lord's servant must avoid foolish arguments that produce quarrels, and refrain from fights and disputes (2 Tim. 2:24). How can we remain true to "contending for the faith" while avoiding the trap of being "contentious for the faith"?

The mind properly equipped with wisdom will not only possess an awareness of God's truths but it will also know how to apply the principles of truth. Wisdom is critical to contending for the faith because of the critical need to keep faith and opinions separated. This frequently calls for a great deal of courage. Yes, one often has to be courageous to defend truth against error. Quite often one must also have the courage to point out human traditions that have been long disguised as part of "the faith." The courage to defend the truth rests squarely on the premise that truth does not have to fear investigation. It will stand up on its own merit; it does not have to be propped up by puny human efforts.

One who is wise in applying God's truths and has the courage to stand for those truths will need a large measure of justice or fairness. Tragically, this is a much neglected attitude among those who pride themselves on being contenders of the faith. A simple test of the golden rule would eliminate a large portion of what can only be characterized as mean-spiritedness among some who believe they are contending for the faith.

To treat others justly, one must interject temperance as an essential ingredient. When we get so involved that we cannot get beyond our own agenda or cannot maintain self-control because our opinions have been mingled with or superimposed on the doctrines of God, we likely will not treat others fairly. Therefore, as wisdom and courage go hand in hand, so do justice and temperance.

Faith, hope and love Paul identifies in 1 Corinthians 13:13 as the greatest attributes of the human heart. To contend for that which one does not believe is absolute truth, is at best inadequate and at worst hypocritical.

The hope of one who contends for the faith, the optimistic view of the ultimate outcome, is rooted in faith. One's ultimate belief that truth will prevail surely must not be grounded in one's ability to defend it. The validity, truthfulness and unalterable nature of God's word exists whether there is one who has the ability to defend it or not.

To use the words of Paul, "the greatest of these is love." One who contends for the faith as prescribed by Jude must obviously love "the faith." However, we cannot just pay lip service to loving "the faith" and ignore the ethical implications of the contents of "the faith." We must not set up a false dichotomy as if "the faith" is a set of sterile laws or codes divorced from real life. "The faith" is what makes life real.

Jude implies that contending for the faith is not the domain of professionals; it is the responsibility of every Christian. Our greatest opportunity for success in contending for the faith without unduly alienating people may lie in our ability to contend with the attitudes suggested in the virtues wisdom, courage, justice, temperance, faith, hope and love. If we allow these attitudes to permeate our contending spirit, perhaps we can avoid developing a contentious spirit.

[Ron is the pulpit minister for the Friendly Ave. Church in Greensboro, NC. Contact him at 5101 W. Friendly Ave., Greensboro, NC 27410.]

Brotherhood News

By Dennis Conner

The PROVIDENCE ROAD CHURCH OF CHRIST in Charlotte, NC, helped to make the Thanksgiving holiday brighter for approximately sixty families by providing them with a Thanksgiving meal and then giving milk and a turkey to each family... J. C. TOWNSEND, former preacher for the church in Orangeburg, SC and teacher at Carolinas Extensions of Southern Christian University (formerly Alabama Christian School of Religion), and his wife, LU, have been honored by SCU for their years of service. A portrait of the Townsends will hang on the SCU Wall of Fame. In addition, a scholarship for outstanding preacher students is being established in brother Townsend's name. J. C. and Lu have been a great inspiration to Christians and students alike throughout their ministry together... Harry Goff, the preacher for the SOUTH STOKES church in King, NC, reports that as of January 1, 1993 the church became financially self-supporting; achieving a major milestone in it's 22 year history... Remember that the CAROLINA LECTURES will be hosted this year by the GREER CHURCH OF CHRIST, Greer, SC. The dates are April 5-8... The BILTMORE CHURCH OF CHRIST in Asheville, NC, will celebrate its 25th Anniversary and Homecoming on April 5. Preaching on this special occasion will be Gene Rainey... The Seventh Annual Small Church Workshop will be hosted by the YADKINVILLE CHURCH OF CHRIST in Yadkinville, NC, May 13-14.

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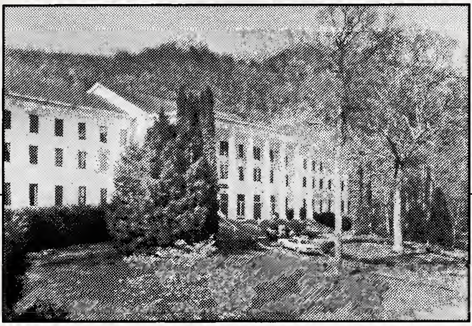

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	8:00- 8:30	OUR GLORY IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST --Gene West	OUR GLORY IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST--Gene West	OUR GLORY IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST--Gene West
	8:40- 9:20	THE CROSS AMID THE WINDS OF CHANGE, II --Winfred Claiborne	THE STUMBLING BLOCK OF THE CROSS--Tom West	ENEMIES OF THE CROSS --Robert Taylor
	9:30- 10:10	MUST JESUS BEAR THE CROSS ALONE?--Jessie Tolliver, III	THE BROTHER FOR WHOM CHRIST DIED--Clayton Winters	THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS--PIONEERS --Adron Doran
10:00 THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS--Claude Pharr	10:30- 11:10	BENEATH THE CROSS--OUR SERVICE--Jerry Carmichael LADIES CLASS: Gerry Nicks	BENEATH THE CROSS--OUR OUTREACH--Bill Nicks LADIES CLASS--Gerry Nicks	BENEATH THE CROSS--OUR DEFENSE--Charles Cochran LADIES CLASS--Gerry Nicks
11:00 BENEATH THE CROSS --David Lipe	11:20- 12:00	BENEATH THE CROSS--PREACHING GOD'S GRACE --Edwin Jones	BENEATH THE CROSS--PREACHING GOD'S JUSTICE --Steve Riley	BENEATH THE CROSS--PREACHING OBEDIENCE --Paul Kidwell
LUNCH HOSTED SUNDAY-WEDNESDAY BY MEMBERS OF THE KARNS CHURCH — EVERYONE WELCOME				
	1:15- 2:05	MAKING THE CROSS OF NONE EFFECT--James Kennedy	THE CROSS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT--Johnny Ramsey	A TRULY CROSS-SHAPED CHURCH--Johnny Ramsey
3:00 THE CROSS AMID THE WINDS OF CHANGE, I --Winfred Claiborne	2:20- 3:00	BOOK REVIEW: THE CRUCIFORM CHURCH --Al Simmons	BOOK REVIEW: THE CORE GOSPEL--Charles Brown	BOOK REVIEW: THE SECOND INCARNATION--Edwin Jones
	3:15- 4:00	OPEN FORUM --David Pharr	OPEN FORUM --David Pharr	OPEN FORUM --David Pharr
			5:00 ALUMNI DINNER	
SINGING--Mike Maddo	7:00	SINGING--Richard Kelly	SINGING--Ken Forrest	SINGING--David Hicks
7:30 THE PASSION OF THE CROSS--James Kenned	7:30	I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST --Johnny Ramsey	RECONCILIATION AND THE CROSS--Tom Miller	THE APPEAL OF THE CROSS --Mack Lyon

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49th Annual Carolina Lectureship

April 5-9

Greer Church of Christ
Greer, SC

editorial

By David Pharr

The Bible shows the necessity of civil government and admonishes Christians to be "subject unto the higher powers" (Rom. 13:1). We are told, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors..." (1 Pet. 2:13f). Peter adds in verse 17 that we are to "honor the king." It is necessary that society have government and it is expected that Christian people will obey its laws and show respect toward civil authorities.

In showing the necessity of civil government, the Bible is equally plain in showing what the purpose of such government ought to be. Peter says that it is "for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well" (1 Pet. 2:14). Paul's explanation likewise shows that the God ordained purpose of government is not that rulers (their laws and enforcements) should be "a terror to good works, but to the evil" (Rom. 13:3). The governments of this world (and their agents) are "ministers of God," "God's ministers," when they attend to this necessary and noble purpose (Rom. 13:4, 6). When, however, any government becomes a supporter of evil and a threat to good, it has abandoned its God-given purpose.

It should be kept in mind that when the New Testament was written, government corruption and tyranny was as widespread as ever in the history of the world. In spite of this, though, Christians were still instructed to fulfill their duties to the government, the only exception being when obedience to such authorities puts them into direct conflict with the will of God (Acts 4:19; 5:29).

Probably no nation has ever enjoyed such a favorable history of benevolent rule as has the United States. In spite of all her failings, the people of this land have been better protected, more charitably cared for, and given more freedom than most peoples have ever dreamed. There is a reason for this and that reason lies in the fact that this government was founded upon ideals that respected and embraced Christian principles. This is not to say that the founding fathers were all Christians; neither is it to say that all of them were men of conscience and integrity. It is to say, however, that the influence of Christianity was sufficiently prevalent that freedom and justice had to be cornerstones of the American system. It is to say that morality was seen to be essential to the well being of society.

Some interesting quotations recently appeared in our Knoxville newspaper. These are not quotations which will be found in the textbooks of our modern public schools. In fact, these things might be ruled unconstitutional if they were taught in public school history classes today. The problem is not whether they are true; the problem is that they do not fit the humanist agenda. They are not politically correct.

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David Pharr, Editor; Johnny Melton, Managing Editor; Dennis Conner, News Editor.

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George Washington, in his "Farewell Address," said: "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars and remove religion and morality from politics."

John Jay, the first chief justice of the Supreme Court, said: "Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and it is the duty as well as the privilege and interest of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers." Of course today's Supreme Court would no doubt rule the first chief justice out of order for such a statement!

John Quincy Adams said: "The highest glory of the American Revolution was this: It connected, in one indissoluble bond, the principles of civil government with the principles of Christianity."

We can only wonder how tragically different our history might have been if this continent had been settled by Muslims, or Hindus, or New Agers, or by politicians like those today who are so willing to coddle sin and who are so afraid to take a stand for Christian moral values. I am not a prophet, but it does not take an especially perceptive person to realize that this country has seen its best days. Observers are saying that America has now entered a "post-Christian era," and who can read the papers and deny that this is true?

This is not an article about political parties. Frankly, I do not have much confidence in politics at all. This is not an article to tell people how they should have voted—right or wrong the votes have already been counted. Neither is this an article intended to make any readers angry with me (though it will probably upset some). The ugly, shameful, undeniable truth is, however, that in his first week in office the new president issued an order that will encourage the killing of babies and sought to take action that would give respectability and acceptability to the filthy perversions of the so-called "gays." (This is being written on February 1, we do not know at this point what congress will allow.)

In a Sunday Bible class the question was raised as to how Clinton and Gore can take the positions they do on these issues when they claim to be members of the Southern Baptist Church. The answer, I think, is that they are politicians first and Baptists second. We differ with our Baptist neighbors on many points, but it would be unfair to suggest that somehow being Baptists caused the president and vice president to take the positions they take. It is also a frequent reality that politics and religion don't mix—not because they shouldn't, but because they have become so incompatible. Government leaders have taken their positions on the issues we have cited either because they lack the moral intelligence to know what is right, or else they lack the moral courage to do what is right, and probably it is a combination of both.

It is somewhat ironic that only a few months ago Tipper Gore, the wife of the vice president, was working to have warning labels put on musical recordings when the lyrics are obscene. And apparently the then Senator Gore stood with her. We applauded her efforts. Then when political opportunity presented itself, she took to the campaign trail under the leadership of a candidate which has made no secret about his rejection of many Christian moral principles. Senator Gore himself made the inane explanation that while he did not favor abortion, he did favor freedom of choice. Of course he is not the only one to try to hide behind this foolish facade. It is nothing more than moral cowardice. If abortion is wrong, it is wrong. If it is wrong, it is the duty of government to stop it, not to allow people to make their own choices about it. Remember what was cited in the beginning of this article: that the purpose of government is to punish people who do wrong. It certainly is not to give them a choice. And, to press the point further, it certainly is not the duty of government to take the money of taxpayers to encourage and assist those who choose to kill their babies.

But we are told, "You can't legislate morality." This is one of those stupid statements that has been repeated so often that thoughtless people just assume that it must be true. (It is like the oft-repeated notion that "prohibition failed." It was not prohibition that failed. What failed was a government that lacked the will to uphold the wishes of the people.) No, legislation cannot make people have the right kind of hearts. Neither will it stop all immoral activity. But legislation against immorality and proper enforcement will put the government back into the business that God ordained for it. The fact is, however, that morality is actually being legislated all the time. Laws against drug abuse and civil rights laws are obvious examples of morality legislation. Those who argue that morality cannot be legislated usually only mean such legislation that would interfere with their own lifestyle.

A few months ago the nation watched the Clarence Thomas hearings. Regardless of who we might have thought was telling the truth, those hearings dragged out all the dirt that could be scraped up from anywhere. We watched and listened as every sordid detail was exposed, questioned, refuted, and exposed some more. I have no sympathy for any wrongdoing which might have been committed by either party. What is astonishing, though, is how so much ado was made over what was charged as being sexual harassment, when it is common knowledge that fornication, drunkenness, adultery and other immoralities are a part of the lifestyles of some of the very ones who eventually voted for or against Judge Thomas.

While we are on the subject of congressional hearings, let us propose some. Why not a televised hearing on abortion? Why not show some real evidence? Congress may pass a national right to abortion law. Will there be the kind of thorough and detailed hearings like there were in the Clarence Thomas case? Will the whole story be told of how certain abortion methods burn the flesh off the infants? Will there be televised testimony about suction devices that shred the bodies of babies as they are ripped from the womb? Again, I make no claim to being a prophet, but I think I know that such testimony will never be allowed. You see, that would not be "politically correct."

Or, will there be hearings that will reveal how depraved homosexuality really is? Yes, there will be some hearings, but they will be kept on a politically acceptable level. We will not expect that much attention will be given to Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9; or Leviticus 18:22; 20:13. Actually little will be said about such texts in churches, so we could hardly expect to hear them in congress. I doubt that any questions will be asked that will really bring out the filth and depravity. You may also be pretty sure that the news media will avoid sharing very much of any sordidness that does happen to be made known. Instead, the populace will hear more of the same old tripe about how gays never hurt anybody and that they want to be treated just like regular people. The gay advocates and their friends in government know that most Americans would suffer sickening revulsion if the whole truth about homosexual practices were accurately and completely made known. Of course several celebrities will be brought in to tell of what great contributions gays have made, and a few million gullible people will fall for some more of the devil's lies.

In the debate over gays in the military our concern is over moral principle, not practical effectiveness. Whether gays can effectively do their duty is not the problem. The fact that there have been gays that have served well in the military or anywhere else is not denied. The real issue is whether presidential policies, congressional policies, public policies, should imply acceptance of moral perversions as merely an alternate lifestyle. Paul's description of heathenism is directly on target: "For even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another: men with men working that which is unseemly...who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (Rom. 1:26-27, 32).

One of the propaganda tricks being used by the pro-gays in the government and in the media is to say that "discrimination" against homosexuals is the same as discrimination against blacks. This is a slick bit of sophistry intended to make those who oppose homosexual practices as being bigots. There is such an essential difference between the two issues, however, as to make them totally without parallel. To those who respect the word of God the difference is obvious: Racism is an evil that the government needs to correct; Homosexuality is an evil that some in government want to approve!

Some states and cities have already passed laws which give special protection for homosexuals. We are not referring to mere protection against their being abused. We are as opposed as anyone to that. The gay rights laws, however, go far beyond the kind of protection which should be provided every person. They may require landlords to rent to homosexuals living together. Some will allow marriage between members of the same sex. Under some of these laws, employers cannot have any anti-gay literature in the work place. This would, of course, have the effect of outlawing the Bible. Brother, you may be sure that the wheels are turning to make such laws for the entire nation.

I did not watch the presidential inauguration, but I understand that the tradition of placing the hand on the Bible was a part of it. This tradition is common when a person takes office at most levels of government. This should be a symbol of an official's intent to seek to serve according to the will of God. If, however, the principles of the Bible, especially its plain declarations on moral issues, are going to be wilfully disregarded, this has to be a hypocritical and sacrilegious performance that can be nothing but blasphemy. One might as well put his hand on a rabbit's foot, or embrace a statue of a toad! When the Bible's teaching means nothing, what does it mean to lay one's hand on the Bible?

Americans have a special privilege in that they are free to express their concerns to the leaders of the nation. Too many of us say too little. One does not have to be an articulate writer to make his concerns known. All that is needed is a postcard, or a simple letter, saying "I oppose abortion. I oppose acceptance of homosexual practices. I stand for Christian moral values." Such letters should be sent to officials in every level of government, from the president down to the local councilman. Politicians may not pay much attention to what God says, but they usually notice what the voters say. Less than 2% of Americans are gay, yet they have made themselves heard. Friends and brethren, it is time for the rest of us to be heard.

One other point needs to be emphasized. Neither abortion or homosexual practices are unpardonable sins. They are indeed heinous, but even these crimes can be forgiven. As followers of Christ, we should hate the sin, but love the sinners. It is not denied that homosexuals may not have chosen to be attracted to members of their own sex. Let this be granted. But the fact remains that God demands that they keep those urges under control. The fact that one's psychological make-up tempts him to be a homosexual, to be one who craves bestiality, to be a child molester, or to be a heterosexual fornicator does not give him license to practice such sins. Read James 1:14-15.

Returning now to the original thought of this article: The purpose of civil government is to protect those who do right and to prevent and punish those who do evil. The kind of evil that ought to especially concern government is moral evil. Unless the government of the United States reverses its direction we shall become as Sodom and Gomorrah.

We are taught to pray for "all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim. 2:1-2). We will pray for the president's health, that he make wise decisions, and that he lead this nation and influence other nations for the good of humanity. We will also pray that God will stop him and all others when they rush madly toward wickedness and ruin. May God bless the government and the people of the United States of America in all that is wholesome and good. May God send whatever chastisement is needed to seek to save this country from destroying itself. ■

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This is the first of a four-part series of articles Dr. Sensing has prepared based on research done for a speech on the subject he delivered some time ago. These articles were prepared several months ago. They have not been hastily thrown together in response to the current flap over gays in the military. Dr. Sensing is a careful, and sensitive scholar. These articles are well researched and carefully written. They will be of particular interest in view of the current national debate over the issue of homosexuality.

Homosexuality: Modern Society and the Ancient Text (Part One)

By Tim Sensing

The voice on the phone asked me to speak on the topic: Homosexuality: Should We Look At It Differently Today? To even ask the question indicates our changing society. What once remained taboo to speak about publicly has leaped out of the closet. It has become fashionable for celebrities, media and civil rights organizations to uphold homosexuality in a favorable light. One who objects to a homosexual lifestyle often is depicted as bigoted and narrow-minded. Different sources speak loudly as to what our view of homosexuality should be. The medical community, ACLU, the Gay Liberation Movement and others all chime together advocating a change of perspective. Even a journal as innocent as **Parents** has a definite bias on the issue. As recent as August 1991, **Parents Magazine** on page 140 stated, ''Anxiety is partly a result of many myths and prejudices about homosexuality. Even in this enlightened age, many people still see homosexuality as a sexual perversion or an illness rather than what it is—a normal and common form of human sexual expression.''

What voice do we listen to? Even the Scriptures have been reinterpreted to advocate a homosexual lifestyle. If this be true, what is God's will on the matter? Holiness in ministry calls us to live in the culture of our day as salt influencing change. Christ as a transformer of culture is our only alternative. Since this is an issue in culture, we need to be Biblically informed.What the Bible says about Homoerotic behavior is not a mystery. Despite a variety of recent attempts, it no longer seems possible to deny that the Scriptures say what they say here. Our task will be to hear the Biblical words in their historical and theological contexts and to interpret them for our own day.

The Kinsey Report in 1948 reported that 37% of males tried homosexuality at sometime during their lifetime. In 1955 Sherwin Bailey wrote a book entitled, **Homosexuality in the Western Tradition**, where he reinterpreted the text of Scripture to support the idea of homosexuality. He states that homosexuality is not against God's will but only the western tradition. Many of his interpretations will be discussed in the following articles. In 1968 Troy Perry, Pastor of Metropolitan Community Church wrote, **The Lord is My Shepherd and He Knows I'm Gay**. In 1972 the United Church of Christ ordained the first male homosexual. In 1975 the Episcopal church ordained the first lesbian minister. Many of you read recently where the United Presbyterian Church and Disciples of Christ are struggling with these same issues. Because Gay activists continue to push for their rights of practice under the constitution, this is an issue that will not go away. Even today there are those within our fellowship who are advocating the Gay lifestyle.

In the broadest sense homosexuality is defined as erotic attraction toward persons of the same gender. The Kinsey Report of 1948 indicates that less than 5% of the population have an exclusive homosexual orientation. There are many variants of homosexual arousal. But the point can be made that homosexuality is not merely one stereotyped behavior pattern. The working definition for these articles is two-fold. First, many homosexuals feel their sexual orientation for a same-sex partner as an internal necessity. They feel obliged by their own feelings to respond as they do. Secondly, many homosexual persons experience heterosexual impulses and arousal, and may well perform heterosexual acts with satisfaction. Nevertheless, this group prefers to choose homosexual over heterosexual experiences.

What causes someone to be a homosexual? There are three common alternatives to explain the origins of sexual orientation. Sigmund Freud advocated that homosexuality is a mental illness. If homosexuality is a mental illness, then the person is not responsible for his or her behavior. This view attracts few adherents today.

The media and the homosexual community advocate that sexual orientation comes from heredity; however, there is no evidence that homosexual traits, tendencies, or orientation are hereditary. Neither is there convincing evidence that any biological factors per se contribute to the development of homosexuality. Chromosomal and hormonal aberration may result in differences in masculinization or feminization of body traits, but that is not sexual orientation. Administration of sex hormones increases sexual drive but does not change the direction of the drive.

Psychological development in identity formation offers the clearest indication of causal factors. In a large nonclinical population study of homosexual development, the researchers report that adult homosexuality is the predictable consequence of detectable childhood preference or feelings about oneself and relationships to significant others. They conclude that homosexuality is the product of an extraordinarily strong conditioning effect.

During the ages 3-5, identity development occurs. The child strongly identifies with the parent of the same gender. Failure to successfully identify, due either to a hostile relationship, absent or distant relationship, or other conflict, leaves the child with an incomplete and inadequate sense of gender identity. These children continue to seek same-gender relations to strengthen their internal search for gender identity. When those relations are eroticized, same-gender sexual arousal occurs. Sexual relations provide a symbolic expression and experience of becoming a whole person of the same gender.

During the ages 5-7, a second period of identity development occurs. The child identifies with the parent of the same gender in learning to relate to the opposite gender. Hostility of one parent toward the other may impair cross gender modeling, as when the father hates the mother. Hence the son learns that male associations are more desirable than relating to women. Or there may be competitive jealousy. For example, a mother may become jealous of her daughter relating to men. Therefore the girl learns that she must restrict her relationships to women.

Based upon the facts identified with gender identity, Christians need to be aware of the differences associated with sexual orientation and behavior. Being tempted is not the same as sin. Jesus was tempted in all points just as we are yet without sin. Desire or inclination is not sin if controlled. There are also heterosexual desires and temptations that you cannot act upon even though the orientation is correct.

The argument that ''God made me this way'' is no more valid for the homosexual than for the adulterer. I know married men who ''play around'' with different women, and they make the excuse, ''I can't help myself; it's not in my nature to be monogamous.'' But God still says adultery is wrong. That individual does not have to be ruled by his desires, as an animal; he can control his desires. That is true for the adulterer, it is also true for the homosexual. God never made anyone a sinner.

The two year old child taught a particular orientation is not responsible for that *orientation*. Nor is the ten, twenty or sixty year old who learned a particular inclination in childhood. Yet, adults are responsible for their *behavior*.

In the next article, the Old Testament understanding of homosexuality will be examined. ■

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History of Twin City Church in Batesburg-Leesville, SC

By Ralph Jones

About 1985, brother Charles Davenport expressed a desire to establish the church in the Gilbert, Batesburg-Leesville area of western Lexington County of South Carolina. Years passed and the dream was dormant. Then in the winter of 1989, brother Davenport discussed the idea and desire with this writer. After some prayerful thought, we decided to approach the elders at St. Andrews Road in Columbia, where we both were members, and make it clear to them that there was no animosity or dissatisfaction that prompted the decision, but a genuine desire to serve the Lord in an area where the truth of God's Word was needed. With the blessings of the St. Andrews Road elders, we then approached the elders at the Lexington church, where the plan was explained. We were assured that all felt the two works were separate enough that our efforts would not overlap. The elders at Lexington also wished us well and God's speed.

On April 30, 1989, the first assembly of the Twin City Church of Christ took place in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Mike Rikard in Leesville. Arrangements were made to meet in the Community Room of Newberry Federal Savings and Loan in Batesburg. The church met there the month of May 1989. We felt we needed something more spacious and accommodating, so a search led to the American Legion Building in Leesville. We agreed with the officers of the Legion on a rental fee and began meeting in that building the first of June 1989.

The church in West Columbia donated a communion set and the St. Andrews Road church in Columbia donated used song books. The Lexington church donated used furniture for the Beginners Class. Brother Jim Eargle volunteered to haul folded chairs from St. Andrews Road as long as there was a need for them. Brother Eargle rendered invaluable service and gave himself unreservedly to the work. Also, brother Eargle went door-to-door offering to teach and teaching. In 1991 personal circumstances dictated that he return to the work at St. Andrews Road in Columbia. We have not abandoned the hope that one day he will retire to his Lake Murray home and join us again.

We were without a regular preacher from April 1989 to May 1990. This writer preached most of the time with brothers Mac Cooper and Joe Manning frequently relieving by bringing morning and evening lessons on Sunday. We are indebted to both these brethren for their support in this critical period.

In March 1990, we invited brother Mike Hinrichs to join us as a part-time evangelist. To our delight, he agreed to do so and preached his first sermon May 6, 1990. We began a building fund June 1990. We decided that all funds remaining in our checking account and uncommitted on the last day of each month would be transferred to the building fund plus any contributions made specifically for that fund. It was determined in June 1990, we would purchase a building site. In the spring of 1991, Charles Davenport and Jim Eargle negotiated the purchase of 1 1/4 acres at the corner of Mitchell and Highlands Streets in Batesburg. We then set our building fund goal at $10,000.00. This would enable us to proceed with plans to build on this site. We reached that goal in April 1992 and the construction started on a building with a seating capacity of 100, and 6 classrooms. This was completed October 1, 1992.

We have been receiving $100.00 per month from the church in West Columbia and from the church in Llano, Texas, since 1991. We are now making an effort to raise an additional $800.00 per month to secure the efforts of brother Mike Hinrichs as full-time evangelist. Any congregation interested in supporting this work, please contact: Ralph J. Jones, c/o Twin City Church of Christ, P. O. Box 411, Batesburg, SC 29006. ■

History of the Church of Christ at Greer, South Carolina

By Oscar Craft

The Lord's church at Greer had its initial beginning in the spring of 1942. At this time there were two families which formed the nucleus of the new work. These were the Broadus A. Graydon and Homer A. Craft families. Chester Hunnicutt, who is well-known for his extensive work among the Cherokee Indians, preached some for the church. Others doing some of the preaching were Broadus Graydon, Homer Craft and Andrew Cudd.

In 1943 a young preacher student from David Lipscomb College, J. Hollis Robertson, came to work during the summer with the new church.

At the first there was a tent meeting with Chester Hunnicutt doing the preaching in the vicinity of East Arlington Street in Greer. The church then met for a short time in a small building located on East Poinsett Street. The church also met in the home of the Craft Family at #11 20th Street, Victor Mill Village. In 1944 the church ceased to meet in Greer. The Graydon Family began worshipping with the Duncan church (where they still attend) and the Craft Family went to the Judson congregation (now Edgewood) in Greenville. In 1945 the Crafts moved to Camden where brother Craft preached for about two years.

The church began meeting in Greer again on November 6, 1966. At this time there was a small, very conservative Christian Church meeting in Greer. The elders at Duncan, along with brethren from Easley, began discussions and serious studies with the leadership of the Christian Church. The differences between the New Testament church and the Christian Church were resolved without compromise of the truth. When these differences were resolved the Christian Church as a group renounced their error and embraced the New Testament church.

During this period of transition brethren Neil Inness and Burl Curtis, both of whom were working with the Easley Church at the time and involved in the discussions and studies with the Christian Church leadership, rotated preaching for the new congregation in Greer.

Brother Curtis began full-time work with the Greer church in January 1967. He continued serving as minister until December 1971 when he resigned and moved to Searcy, Arkansas. Others that have served the congregation as minister are: Bill G. Smith (January '72 - July '73); Jerry Senn (July '73 - June '84); Grey Flippen (July '84 - April '89); and Oscar P.

49th Annual Carolina Lectureship —

4 Sunday		5 Monday	6 T
	9:00 am to 9:50 am		Woman's Ro David Pharr ETSOPM Knoxville, T
Bible Study David Pharr	10:00 am to 10:50 am		Humanism – Donald Rho Mauldin, SC
Morning Worship David Pharr	11:00 am to 11:50 am		Fellowship - Donald Rho Mauldin, SC
LUNCH	12:00		LUNCH
	1:30 pm to 2:20 pm	The Church — The Bride of Christ Henry Colbert Brevard, NC	The Lottery Floyd Dethr Winston-Sal
	2:30 pm to 3:20 pm	The Need for Strong Leadship in the Church John Mayo Lenior, NC	Marriage an Home as Go Jim Hunter Asheville, N
	3:30 pm to 4:20 pm	Discipline in the Church — Is It Required Today Don Nix Union, SC	The Purpose the Church Raymond C Clinton, SC
	4:30 pm	BREAK FOR DINNER	BREAK FO
	7:00 pm	SINGING	SINGING
Evening Worship David Pharr	7:30 pm	Euthanasia — Mercy Killing or Murder David Vaughn Gastonia, NC	Abortion — Murder Terry Burre Orangeburg

hat Does the Bible Say? April 4-8, 1993

day	7 Wednesday	8 Thursday
the Home	Woman's Role in Society David Pharr ETSOPM Knoxville, TN	Woman's Role in the Church David Pharr ETSOPM Knoxville, TN
hat Is It?	Humanism — How Its Influence Is Felt in the Home Bob Bickle Rock Hill, SC	Humanism — How Its Influence Is Felt in the Church Stanley Crews Williamston, SC
hat Is It?	Why Denominations Can Not Be Fellowshipped by the Church Samuel Means Spartanburg, SC	Fellowship — Having the Attitude of Christ Will T. Winchester Marion, NC
	LUNCH	LUNCH
ambling NC	Alcoholism — Sin or Disease Quille Brooker Orangeburg, SC	Drug Use and Its Consequence Danny Boggs Hendersonville, NC
Home — the ould Have It	Divorce and the Home — the Only Reason and Must One Divorce Because of It Wesley Crisp Greenville, SC	Remarriage and the Home — Its Effects and Dangers Robert C. Oliver Clinton, NC
iscipline in ome r	Who Is the Subject of Discipline Charles Fetters Lexington, NC	How the Disciplined Should Be Treated & How the Repentant Is to Be Received Mike Winkler Columbia, SC
NNER	BREAK FOR DINNER	BREAK FOR DINNER
	SINGING	SINGING
n Control or	Homosexuality — Alternate Lifesyle or Sin David Powell Mocksville, NC	Victory Over Sin — In Christ Jack Tittle Rocky Mount, NC

Craft (October '89 - present).

When the work began as the Church of Christ in November 1966 the Duncan Church of Christ sent the Elmer Smith Family and the Otis Burch Family to help form a strong working nucleus for the new congregation.

In June 1967 the congregation was able to purchase 2.5 acres of land with a six room house located on Highway 14 (1215 South Main Street). The house served as a meeting place until the present facility was built in 1971. In March 1978 a building designed for additional classrooms, office, library and fellowship was completed.

The first elders appointed for the Greer Church were Elmer Smith and Burl Curtis. They were appointed to this work in September 1968 and continued to serve until the departure of brother Curtis in December 1971.

Among those conducting Gospel meetings at Greer have been: Neil Inness, Ron Brotherton, Bill Mead, Don Smyth, Eddie Bowman, Bill Goodpasture, Herb Aslup, Glen Ramsey, J. C. Watkins, Rhoden Presnell, Howard Winters, Carl Maples, David Pharr, Don Murrell, Owen Albricht, Bobby Duncan and Billy Lambert. Brethren Albricht and Bobby Duncan preached in conjunction with campaigns.

Two campaigns have been conducted in the community by the Greer Church. Owen Albricht and 46 dedicated volunteers came and conducted a door-knocking campaign August 4-23, 1968. Those who came with brother Albricht were college students from Christian schools. To assist in the follow-up work after the campaign six families moved to Greer for one year. This campaign and its follow-up resulted in 16 baptisms, 1 restoration and 11 additional responses in the immediate 60 days following the campaign.

The second campaign was conducted August 5-8, 1991. The elders of the Adamsville Church of Christ in Adamsville, Alabama brought 30 volunteers. During this period more than 1,800 homes had their doors knocked. The door-knocking was during the day with Bobby Duncan preaching each evening. The song service for this campaign was directed by Tim Rice of the Adamsville church. During the campaign there were two baptisms and four restorations. An additional five souls were baptized in the follow-up work. During the campaign there were 76 requests for Bible Correspondence Courses and 24 for home Bible studies.

The congregation hosted the 25th Annual Carolina Lectureship Program in April 1969. The 49th Annual Carolina Lectureship Program is being hosted by the Greer Church April 5-8, 1993.

In the fall of 1992 the Greer Church began an Annual Palmetto Biblical Studies Program. The first program was held October 25-29, 1992. Billy Lambert of Saraland, Alabama was the keynote speaker each evening. Others that spoke on this initial program were: David Vaughn, Edwin Jones, Will T. Winchester, Richard McWilliams, Don Nix, Mike Winkler, Bob Bickle, Tom Snyder, Robert Curry, Jim Hunter, Henry Colbert, Stanley Crews, Jerry Craft, Terry Burress, Steven Guy and Ernie Richards.

The Greer Church has also hosted three Bible Teachers Training Workshops. They were in November 1960, August 1971 and June 1979.

The congregation hosts an Annual Singing on Friday evening following Thanksgiving day each year. The eighth such event will be November 26, 1993.

In January 1991 Greer was selected to be the host for the Bi-Monthly Area Workshop. This program was originally started by J. C. Watkins while he was at Edgewood in Greenville. Ministers from the area congregations are invited to be co-hosts for this program. This program is designed for all Christians. It is held on the third Mondays of January, March, May, July, September and November. ■

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Love One Another

By Donald W. Nix

This writer has never claimed perfection and is very conscious of his shortcomings. This is not to say that he is satisfied or has reached a stage beyond which he feels he cannot go. Life is a process of growth and, hopefully, my faults are not as severe as they once were.

My purpose in writing this article is to bring about a greater understanding of how we ought to deal with others, especially our young people.

One of the best suggestions that the writer has ever heard was the idea of taking young men just graduating from college, schools of preaching, or just beginning to preach, and allowing them a sort of internship with an older preacher and good elders. This would allow time for them to meet everyday situations and to have the council of godly men as to how to handle them. Mistakes, that he is bound to make, could be dealt with patiently and lovingly.

The above might salvage many preachers that are being lost to the pulpit today. Sadly, our young men usually go to small congregations that have no elders and must stand on their own. Youth is not on their side in dealing with the various problems that will arise. The brethren, though, will expect them to act as a seasoned veteran. They will be heaped with abuse and given little understanding or help in doing a better job. Many move from place to place until they gain the experience necessary to cope, while many others just quit.

These young men usually live away from their families, therefore, the support system that most people have is not there for them. They have no one but their wives's and children's shoulders to cry on, and they are also brought down emotionally with them.

But preachers are not the only ones who suffer. Our young people are often cruelly treated. Youth has energy, imagination and high ideals. These traits are great, but can lead to problems that must be handled. The key is to handle them properly. (Should we not also deal carefully with every member?)

Many preachers have been fired and the perceived unjustness of it has left them with terrible mistrust of their brethren and also self-doubt. Can we not do a better job? Let us preserve our people. Stop thinking about ourselves and more about the souls of every member. Even when they need rebuke, let us be gentle and patient.

For way too long we have expected everyone to act like we want them to act. When they fail to live up to our expectations, we come down hard on them as if they were mature enough to handle it. Shame on us! Most of the time none of us are emotionally able to handle the rejection that we feel on such occasions. Before we come down on a young person, a preacher or anyone for that matter, ask yourself this question, "If this were my son or daughter, how would I want others to treat them?" (Please read Matthew 7:12.)

How many preachers have been asked to leave once they find out what the real problem is within a congregation and begin to preach to correct it? Change, of course, is out of the question; just get another preacher. How many times have we been guilty of discouraging our young people, even older people, because of some infraction of the rules (how we think it should be done) without trying to help them and teach them a better way? To our shame, when they need us most we so discourage them to the point some quit. "But," we say, "if they had been truly converted they would not have quit." Never once do we feel the guilt and shame that we should, because, we will do it again and again.

Let's not assume everyone is at the same stage of spiritual maturity that we are. Be kind, gentle, patient and forgiving of each other's shortcomings and by all means take the time to teach and work with them that the valuable resources of our fellow members, young and old, not be lost to the church. Let us love them enough to work out the problems and preserve each other's spiritual lives. ■

[P. O. Box 64, Union, SC 29379.]

I Can Listen to the Good Shepherd

By Michael R. Mobley

The Lord is my shepherd, He is all I want" (Psa. 23:1, a little girl's "translation.") This means that I do not want this world we live in with all of its immorality, materialism, aggression, cruelty, and gods. It means that I do not want to replace God (Matt. 6:19-24). It may not be the popular thing to do, there may be a risk, there may be pressure brought to bear if I follow Christ through this life. But I can listen to Christ and follow Him because all I want is to please God. All I want is His approval, His truth, and His people, the faith, the Bible, and the church.

However, there are different kinds of followers of the Shepherd (Christ). Some are fickle followers. One day they are "gung-ho!" and another day they want to quit. There are the complaining followers. They say they want to follow Christ, but they will not accept the conditions and terms. Others are worldly followers. They want to live both ways, want the blessings and good life of Christianity but they also want the materialism, immorality and pleasure the world offers. However, each of these is a contradiction of life and terms.

We do not follow Christ when we are not committed and devoted to trust and serve God only. So, the Good Shepherd will always have His faithful sheep. All they want to do is serve the Creator. So they will listen to His Son Jesus Christ who will shepherd them safely through this world until we reach God in the pastures of heaven, a perfect world, perfect home, and perfect life.

What can we do to faithfully follow Christ through this life we have been given to live? Simply this, listen to Christ and refuse to listen to anyone who does not listen to the Good Shepherd. "I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize the stranger's voice" (John 10:1-5, NIV).

The sheep and shepherd relationship is used to demonstrate the relationship that exists between the saved and their Savior. It explains why people follow Jesus and His teachings and work. Sheep know their shepherd's voice. They recognize when he is talking and what he is saying, and they recognize when the voice they are hearing is not their own shepherd's voice. Therefore, those who will listen to Jesus' teachings are not misled by false shepherds who do not listen to Jesus, even though they may be preachers, elders, Bible class teachers, friends, family members, classmates, coworkers, celebrities, public leaders or whatever.

Now, if we want to follow Jesus, if God is all we want to build our life upon, how does the sheep and shepherd relationship apply? First, we must stop thinking that it has to be our own way; we must stop thinking that we are right because that is the way we want it to be. Then listen to what Jesus has to say about the matter. Second, stop thinking that our friends or peers are right just because they are our peers or friends. Finally, for the young people, stop thinking that grownups, especially our parents and older Christians, are wrong because they are grown up. Sheep do not try to find another when they hear the shepherd's voice. They go to their shepherd! We must open our eyes and not close our minds. We must listen to the Good

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What, then, does all of this mean? Let us decide that we want to follow Christ and then open up our minds and listen to what He has to say. If we will listen to Him, we will believe. If we believe Him, we will follow Him. And if we follow Him, He will lead us into an abundant life, a life in the good and rich pastures of holiness, righteousness, and truth (John 10:7-10). Dare to be different and stop parroting what "the majority" is saying. Joseph would not listen to the tempting words and actions of an evil woman because he was listening to God (Gen. 39:9-12). Meshach, Shadrach, and Abed-Nego would not listen to the law of an evil king. They accepted what they knew was the risk in order to listen to God, and disobeyed the king (Dan. 3:16-18). The once-blind beggar who was healed by Jesus was going to be "thrown out of the church" by its leaders because the more they tried to convince him not to listen to Jesus, the more he was convinced to listen to the Good Shepherd and believe. He would not accept the beliefs of the crowd because he had decided to follow Jesus Christ, the Son of God (John 9:27-39).

To whom are we listening? The answer is found in another question: Who do we want to believe and follow, Christ or someone else? Let us open our minds and hearts to the Bible and not the world. Then we will hear and know the voice of the Good Shepherd, follow Him, and reject the voice of the thieves and robbers! ■

[P. O. Box 312, Mooresville, NC 28115.]

The Rule of Faith and Practice

By Dan Payne

When we think of God as creator of the universe, the solar system and human beings, it is not hard to see that there are patterns in all of these things. Medical scientists are learning more each day about genetic patterns that transmit traits from parents and grandparents to their children. If a seamstress makes a dress she will use a pattern to cut out the pieces of the garment; so will a tailor. If a person wishes to build a building he will hire an architect to draw the plans from which the blueprint is made. This will be followed by the contractor when the building is constructed. When a cook prepares food a recipe is followed. We could spend the day expanding this idea to many areas of our lives. Do teachers follow patterns? How about lawyers and doctors? A pattern does not have to be written to be a pattern for it can exist in the mind of its creator. Isn't it interesting that the Bible tells us God created man in His image! Man has been imitating his creator by creating from the days of Adam until now.

Is God concerned with patterns? Let's turn to the Bible and see. When God determined to cleanse the corrupt earth of the wicked people, God told Noah to make a boat and gave him specific directions for the ark. "Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him" (Gen. 6:9-22). When Moses was instructed by God to make the tabernacle he told him, "According to

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all that I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so shall you make it'' (Exod. 25:9). Of the furnishings for the tabernacle He said, ''And see that you make them after the pattern for them, which is being shown you on the mountain'' (Exod. 25:40). He was even told, ''And you shall erect the tabernacle according to the plan for it which has been shown you on the mountain'' (Exod. 26:30).

Noah and Moses were faithful to God when they followed His instructions. Jesus, God's Son, was given a message for mankind. He tells us in John 12:49: ''For I have not spoken on my own authority; the Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what to say and what to speak.'' He has also told us, ''If you love me, you will keep my commandments'' (John 14:15). Paul told the Corinthians, ''Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ (1 Cor. 11:2). To the Thessalonian Christians he said, ''So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter'' (2 Thess. 2:15).

Just as God created the universe and we can see patterns in it, just as we use patterns in every day life, just as Noah, Moses, Jesus and Paul had specific instructions they were expected to follow, we too must follow the pattern of Jesus' example in living the Christian life as well as God's patterns for the organization and work of the church. ■

[Brother Payne preaches for the congregation in Albemarle, NC, P. O. Box 245, 28002.]

Jesus the Farmer

By Gary G. Payne

Warm weather brings out the horticulturist in all of us. When I was a kid my dad planted about four times more garden than we needed. And, guess who had to work it? I did. And, I didn't like it. I even hoed a few plants at the roots so I would have less to work with the next time. But now things have changed. I enjoy working in the yard. It's because it is my yard. I like to get it looking good.

Planting a garden can be a lot of work: Preparing the soil; tilling; working in manure or fertilizer; watering; using the proper amount of insecticide (unless you grow organic gardens); weeding. I'm breaking a sweat just talking about it. Now, when you put in all that work you expect something to happen. You expect a good crop.

But, how would you feel if only a few withered, puny vegetables came up? How would you like gardening if the weeds did better than your garden? Read Isaiah 5:1-7. God built a watchtower to protect His precious garden. From the watchtower His servants could spot impending doom. His servants, like Isaiah, could send out the word so that God's fruit would survive. So God asked, ''What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it'' (Isa. 5:4)?

A garden that does not produce is not worth working. So God tore down the fences keeping out the enemy. He let the briers and thorns take over. He let His garden dry up. God did all He could. But, if people are going to go their own way, God is not going to stop them. Because His people rejected their Lord, He let the Babylonians take their nation away. You would expect more out of those who call themselves the people of God. But they let the weeds do better than the fruit.

Several hundred years later Jesus came on the scene. Throughout His life, and especially during His ministry, what He saw in the religious establishment was disgusting. He did not go looking for a fight. But there comes a time when enough is enough. Nothing made His blood boil more than to see people taking advantage of others, especially when religious people took advantage of others! So when Jesus went into the temple, He didn't hold back. Jesus had enough. ''Is it not written,'' Jesus cried out, '''My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations?' But you have made it 'a den of robbers''' (Mark 11:17). So, Jesus turned their business upside down.

Now, when people are getting their pockets lined, they do not like it very much if someone takes it away. When people are getting their way, it does not go over very well when they no longer call the shots. The religious leaders come up to Jesus and say, ''Who do you think you are? What right do you have coming around here doing these things?'' They were too self-serving to consider that Jesus just might have authority from God Himself. Read Mark 12:1-12.

Today, the church is God's vineyard. God is doing everything right to make it grow. He gives His love. He gives His blood because of our sins. God tills the ground, adds the fertilizer, puts in the proper amount of insecticide. How can His vineyard not bear fruit?! Something is seriously wrong if it does not.

One preacher makes this comment: ''The final condemnation of the Jewish people came because they retained the outward forms of religion, but denied its power. They recited all the proper Scriptures. They went through the movements of a correct and dignified worship, but they knew nothing of religion as a dynamic power to change their lives. I wonder if we are too different from the way they were. I wonder if our nominal, half-hearted, lukewarm, Sunday-only Christianity is anything more than a leafy tree with no fruit."

Read Mark 12:10-11. I don't want to be guilty of rejecting Jesus. My sins already put Him on the cross. I don't want to do Him wrong anymore. It's time to live life His way. ■

Timothy Robert Presley

By Walter Wagner

Tim Presley was a member of the Church of God denomination and wanted to become a preacher. However, he had enough respect for the word of God to understand that what they taught was not what he was finding in his studies.

He also knew a member of the Sigsbee Church of Christ in Spartanburg, and through this contact he began to realize that the church of Christ was like what he found in God's word. He later moved to the Slater-Marietta area and was baptized into Christ.

This twenty-six year old single man has been accepted at the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions. He has a mobile home and his total expense per month will be $660.00 ($400.00 for food, gas, etc.; $100.00 for books and supplies; and $160.00 for trailer space). After two years he plans to return to the Carolinas and preach here, converting others from error.

If any congregation can help this young man, contact East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions, 6608 Beaver Ridge Road, Knoxville, Tennessee 37931.

Before I baptized Tim into Christ, it was refreshing to see how much of the gospel plan of salvation he had already worked out from his own study. ■

[Box 152, Slater, SC 29683.]

A Look at Books

By Johnny R. Melton

Diggs, Steve, **Free to Succeed** (Tarrytown, NY: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1992), Cloth, 220 pages.

Steve Diggs is a multi-talented man with strong faith in God. He is a graduate of David Lipscomb University and a successful business man in Nashville, Tennessee.

Free to Succeed is a motivational book that is geared to promote godly success. The sub-title is *12 Dynamic Keys to Experiencing and Enjoying Godly Success.*

The twelve keys are rooted deeply in Scripture and are well-illustrated with anecdotes from the authors experiences.

The chapters on *integrity* (chapter 4), *positive affirmation* (chapter 8), *building memories* (chapter 9), *listening* (chapter 11), and *the home* (chapter 12) were particularly challenging.

This book could be the basis for an Adult Bible Class, a small group study, or even a sermon series. It certainly should be on the reading list of every Christian engaged in business.

■

Sanford, North Carolina

By Mike Glenn

The congregation in Sanford, NC began about three years ago. They are the only congregation in a county of 42,000 souls except for an ''anti-cooperation'' congregation of about 20 members. The town of Sanford has a population of 15,000.

For slightly over two years, the congregation of four families existed without a regular preacher. In September 1991, Mike Glenn and his family moved to Sanford to work with the church. During the past three years, the membership and their families grew to about 32, involving ten families. In the past year, there were two baptisms and two restorations. However, due to household moves and job transfers, we now have only 14 in regular attendance. We yet have confidence that the work here is going to go forward, but for optimum progress, we are going to need financial help in certain areas.

When our preacher, Mike Glenn, moved here from Hilham, TN, he had not been able to raise all of his support. Because we experienced moderate growth in membership, and excellent growth in contribution, we were able to make up most of the difference.

Having, however, lost over half of our membership due to job changes and transfers and household moves, our contribution is now half its former amount. We have lost over $1200 per month. We are trying to raise a thousand of this back. Since we are presently receiving about $1500.00, this would make a total of $2500.00 per month of support we are trying to raise for our minister's salary.

We presently rent a Civitan building for our services. We only have its use for our service times. Its cost is $300 per month. It contains no classrooms. We have discovered that being in a temporarily rented building has the tendency to destroy any sense of permanence in the eyes of the community. We have determined to build.

We have had preliminary plans drawn for a building which will seat 120. It also has four large classrooms, two small classrooms or offices, bathrooms, and a nursery. It will be a brick exterior and sheetrock interior. We will begin with folding chairs if we cannot find some used pews.

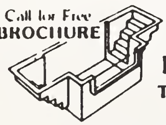
We are capable of building the building ourselves. Congregations within a couple hours drive have volunteered help. The cost estimate on materials from local building suppliers is about $55,000. Just this week, the brick was donated by a local brick manufacturer, saving us about $5000.00.

We are requesting a one-time contribution of any amount ($1.00-$10,000). We will buy land as soon as we can afford it and then proceed with the building. We believe that we can finance $20,000-$30,000 ourselves.

Is there a reader who is an architect, who could donate his services to provide the final building plans? Does someone have some pews they could donate?

The church of Christ in Shelby, NC, has had a special interest in the Sanford work. They have agreed to receive and oversee contributions to the Sanford building fund (P. O. Box 414, Shelby, NC 28150).

The address for the Sanford congregation is P. O. Box 3731, Sanford, NC 27331. The preacher, Mike Glenn, can be telephoned at (919) 774-8502. ■



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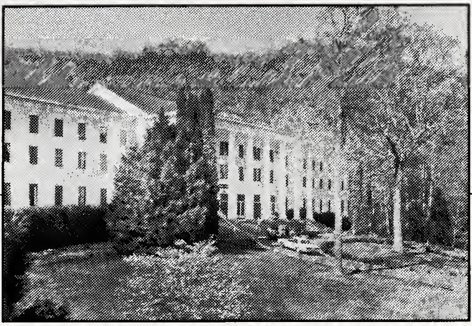

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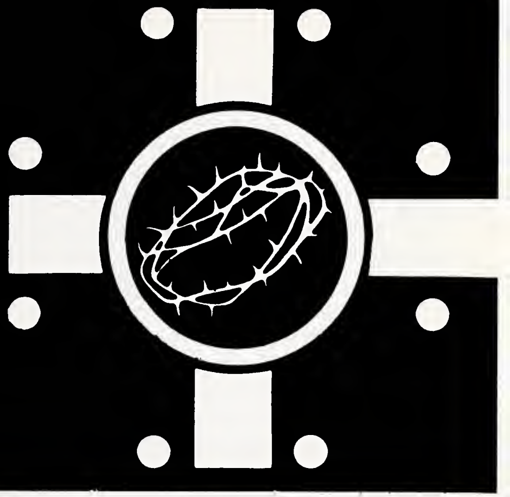

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Special Issue

Studies in Philemon

Editorial

By David Pharr

Paul's letter to Philemon has only twenty-five verses. It may seem to contain little of theological significance, yet the epistle is very significant in the way it demonstrates brotherly love, confidence and diplomacy.

Probably Paul wrote many private letters, but his personal letter to Philemon is the only purely personal correspondence that has been preserved for us. It provides much about the personality of the apostle himself. It also shows us much about the reputation of Philemon as Paul knew him.

We have only the implications of the letter itself to supply us with background information. We are, however, able to discover several things about the relationship of Paul and Philemon and about Onesimus, the main subject of the letter. The articles that follow discuss what can be surmised about the circumstances. Set in these circumstances we have a charming example of how one brother uses sincere compliments, patience, reminders and promises to gently persuade another brother to do the right thing.

Perhaps you will want to read through Philemon a few times before you read the articles. We appreciate the participation of each of the men who have prepared these lessons.

Editor Resigns

The next issue of **Carolina Christian** (May) will be my last issue as editor of the magazine. The board of directors will be selecting a new editor and will make an announcement when a decision has been made. The decision to resign from the magazine is altogether mine. I have no doubt but that all of the board members would prefer that I continue. I want it to be absolutely clear that there has been no effort by the board to get me to resign.

The members of the board of directors are all good friends. I have had a good relationship with them, which I expect to continue. My resignation must not be interpreted as a "falling out" between them and me.

Why have I chosen to resign? As with any decision there are various factors. First, there is the fact that the publication has a special relationship to the Carolinas, and I am now living in Tennessee. My heart remains with the church in the Carolinas, but my living in another state may suggest to some that I am not as much in touch with the Carolina situation as the editor should be. This is a concern of my own. The board has never mentioned it to me.

The immediate and most pressing reason for my decision is that the board has asked me to give less attention to issues which are controversial. This is not to say that the board is sympathetic with error nor that they do not share some of the same concerns that I have. It would

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION STAFF

David Pharr, Editor; Johnny Melton, Managing Editor; Dennis Conner, News Editor.

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be unfair to assume that the board is not loyal to the truth. They do, however, feel that **Carolina Christian** should not give as much attention to brotherhood problems as I have given to some of them during my tenure as editor. The board has adopted an editorial policy which is in no way unscriptural, but one which my own temperament and judgment would find difficult to follow.

I sincerely request that no hasty assumptions be made regarding the future of the magazine. Whoever is chosen to be the next editor should be given ample opportunity to prove himself. There are no church "politics" involved in this change. Let us all pray that **Carolina Christian** will always be an effective tool for the cause of Christ.

While the May issue will be my last as editor, I have offered to assist with the publication in an unofficial way until a new editor is selected and an orderly transition can be made.

I was born in North Carolina and I was born again in North Carolina. Most of my preaching years were spent in South Carolina. Each year I preach in several gospel meetings in the Carolinas. Having been converted from a denominational background and having watched the progress of the Lord's church in the Carolinas, I have been both thankful for the progress and watchful for dangers. I confess to being very jealous for the cause of truth and I fear that there are some dark clouds gathering on the brotherhood's horizon. That I have often been outspoken cannot be denied. I have made mistakes, and sometimes my fervor for truth may have appeared to be extreme. Still, I believe that even those who may have most strongly disagreed, if they have known me personally, have known me to be a friend. I have received many encouraging letters, calls, and in-person comments in recent weeks. For all of this I am grateful and I will appreciate hearing from anyone. I want to be of any service I can.

I expect to continue to write for various publications. I will continue to edit the quarterly **Messenger** from East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions. (It is sent free to those who request it.) ■

The Board of Directors of Carolina Christian Publications, Inc. has regretfully accepted brother Pharr's resignation as Editor of **Carolina Christian**. It is with deep gratitiude for his untiring efforts that we wish for him God's greatest blessings in all his labors for the Gospel's sake. A more extensive statement regarding brother Pharr's work, as well as an announcement of an interim editor, will be published in next month's issue.

—Dennis Conner, Chairman ■

Studies in Philemon

The Occasion of the Epistle

By Ron Edwards

This personal letter was written from Rome during the apostle's first imprisonment. During Paul's imprisonment, it is believed that he wrote the following epistles: Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon. The Epistle to the Colossians was delivered by one of Paul's helpers, Tychicus (Col. 4:7), who was accompanied by Onesimus (Col. 4:9), and a slave who had run away from his master, Philemon, who was a Christian in Colossae.

Through the providence of God, Onesimus had made his way to Rome and had come into contact with the apostle Paul. He had been converted to Christ by the teaching of Paul, who referred to him as, "my child, whom I have begotten in my bonds, Onesimus's' (Phile. 10, ASV). His conversion is evident by his change! He was now willing to return to his master. Like Paul, he now knew he was a servant of the Master in heaven. It is true that Philemon had suffered some form of property damage or loss by Onesimus. Paul acknowledges this in verses

11 and 18, "who once was unprofitable to thee, ...if he hath wronged thee at all, or oweth thee aught, put that to mine account."When Paul sent the epistle to Colossae, he sent Onesimus back to Philemon. The letter to Philemon was written to explain the circumstances of Onesimus's return and to introduce him as a brother in the Lord, and not just a returning slave! He asked Philemon to receive Onesimus as more than a servant. He was now a brother in the Lord.

It is evident from the tone of the letter that Paul and Philemon were more than casual friends or acquaintances. Theirs was a relationship based on their oneness in Jesus Christ. This oneness had produced a mutual love and respect for one another and confidence in one another to do the right thing. Paul's personal request of Philemon would test the genuineness of their relationship. Philemon's "new creature" character and brotherly love would certainly be put to the test, as he was asked to receive into his household again his runaway slave and to extend to him the right hand of fellowship as a brother in the Lord. "No longer as a servant, but more than a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much rather to thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord" (Phile. 16).

Onesimus, upon his conversion, had become a great helper and asset to Paul. Paul would have liked to have had Onesimus's continued help. In fact, he had evidently considered it as a way for Philemon to assist him in his work. However, Paul states "without thy mind, I would do nothing; that thy goodness should not be as of necessity, but of free will." It seems to me that Paul had confidence in Philemon to the extent that he believed he would have agreed to such an arrangement. But that was not Paul's way of involving brethren. His way was to have men serve out of their own free will rather than of necessity. Therefore, he sent the changed Onesimus back to his master!

In this short letter we see how God's providence worked in the lives of Philemon, Onesimus, and Paul to effect one soul's salvation and progress in the Lord's cause. We also see how Paul accomplished his role as a peace maker as he first brought Onesimus to God and then sent him back to Philemon. Peace between men, even masters and slaves, comes when both are at peace with God. ■

[126 Sewell Rd., Jacksonville, NC 28540]

Studies in Philemon

The People Involved

By Wellington H. Smith, Jr.

Paul and Timothy are the senders of the letter. They are "brothers" in Christ and they present themselves as authorized witnesses. Two witnesses whose testimonies agree constitute a valid proof (cf. Deut. 19:15). The message they send in the letter is intended to have binding force and be convincing; it is meant to overcome any opposition that might be aroused against it.

Paul writes as a prisoner of Jesus Christ. He used this title, not to arouse sympathy and so prepare the way for his request and his ex-

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hortation, but to remind Philemon of Christ who stands before him in the person of his imprisoned apostle. He writes as one who suffers for Christ's sake and as such he claims a hearing.

The chains that he wears are Christ's chains. It is Christ who allows His apostle to share His own chains. It is to Him that Paul dedicates all his thoughts and all his service; Christ lives in him. The chains he wears are "Christ's scars" (Gal. 6:17), which Paul bears in his own body. He carries about continually in his body the dying state of Jesus, so that the living power of Jesus may be manifest in his body too (2 Cor. 4:10). It is in suffering that his labors reach their highest peak. He suffers so that grace made manifold in many lives may increase the sum of gratitude that is offered to God's glory (2 Cor. 4:15).

The letter is addressed to Philemon and his wife Apphia, together with Archippus, possibly a leader in the Christian community, and the church that met in Philemon's house. Philemon owned a house at Colossae that was on the great trade route leading from Ephesus through the tortuous valleys of the Meander and the Lycus to Apameia and thence to Tarsus, through the Cilician Gates. The town most probably shared in the wool industry of the Lycus valley. Philemon was converted by Paul (v. 19), probably during the time he was preaching at Ephesus (A.D. 54-57).

The group that assembled at Philemon's house were, perhaps, just a part of the total number of Christians that were in Colossae. Philemon and Apphia put their home at its disposal.

The letter primarily concerned Philemon, but Paul does not address it only to him; he addresses it solemnly and officially to the church of which Philemon was a member. He makes known his wish, not in private, but before the whole church. What passes between one Christian and another affects the church that assembles in a particular place and through it affects the church everywhere. The group in Philemon's house was part of the universal church. Every Christian bears responsibility for the church.

Philemon is called well beloved because he is a Christian. God has bestowed his love on Christians (Rom. 8:28, 31-39), and chosen them out of his love (Eph. 1:4f). He has poured out his love in their hearts (Rom. 5:5). In return, he demands that they be guided by love. When one makes an appeal to Christian love, he should not be disillusioned.

Paul introduces Philemon as one who "shares his labors." This puts him on the same level as Marcus and Lucas (v. 24), Prisca and Aquila (Rom. 16:3), Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25) and Clement (Phil. 4:3). All of them could share in Paul's labors, because he labored in the service of God's kingdom and worked for the spread of the gospel. For its sake, he undertakes any toil (1 Thess. 3:2, Col. 4:11).

Paul loves Apphia as his sister. "Well beloved" and "brother" (sister) are corresponding ideas (v. 16; 1 Thess. 2:8). Love finds its expression in that Christians treat one another as brothers and sisters. A real Christian is a person guided by love and realizes that all other Christians are his brothers and sisters. He lives by this conviction and shares the work of proclaiming the gospel.

Archippus is described as "a fellow soldier" with Paul (Phil. 2:25). In the church at Colossae, he had fulfilled the task committed to him in the Lord's service (Col. 4:17). He was certainly an evangelist there and was possibly an elder. Paul's labors take the form of fighting a battle (Phil. 4:3; 2 Cor. 10:4). Archippus fought the good fight with him. It is a struggle against the princedoms and powers, against those who have mastery of the world in these dark days, against malign influences in an order higher than ours (Eph. 6:12).

Paul refers to Onesimus as his other self: "receive him as myself" (v. 17). In the new existence that is the fruit of baptism, Christ lives in those baptized. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). Paul has a share in Christ and so have Philemon and Onesimus. Christ must be apparent in each Christian himself in his ordinary daily life. According to the law of the time, Onesimus had wronged his master by his flight, because of the loss of income he caused him, which was equivalent to stealing—as Paul was well aware. This loss had to be made good. The new life in Christ does not cancel debts incurred during a person's previous life. Paul himself is willing to make good the loss Onesimus was responsible for, and he includes a promissory note in his letter. His use of the legal formula, "I will repay it" (v. 19), and his signature is meant to give it binding force in law. Paul is willing to substitute himself for Onesimus, who is his child, his brother, and his other self. Real love proves itself by deeds. It is ready to stand up for others and take their place even to the point of giving its life on their behalf.

The list of greetings contains the same names as Colossians 4:10-14. Epaphras heads the list; he had established congregations at Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea (Col. 4:13). Because of the ministry he exercised, he shares Paul's imprisonment. Marcus had been a companion of Paul at one stage, but then he abandoned him. Now he is with him again. Aristarchus from Thessalonica had shared all his sufferings faithfully (Acts 19:29; 27:2). Demas later left Paul out of love for this present world (2 Tim. 4:10). Lucas, the beloved physician (Col. 4:14), is the writer of the third gospel, the book of Acts and a disciple of Paul. ■

[Brother Smith preaches for the congregation in Monroe, NC.]

Studies in Philemon

Slavery in Philemon

By Dennis Conner

How should the present day church view the social ills that plague our society? How involved should the church become in addressing those concerns and what strategies employed in bringing about change? Or should the church exhibit a social concern at all? These are important questions deserving of a thoughtful response. In formulating that response Paul's letter to his friend Philemon offers some helpful insights.

In the context of that correspondence the issue raised is that of slavery. From our modern perspective the evil and inhumanity of a human being's reduction to the status of property, of something to be owned, is clearly unacceptable and thoroughly repulsive. In ancient Rome, however, only a few voices were raised in opposition and slavery was an integral part of Roman society. Some scholars have estimated that as much as one third of Rome's population consisted of slaves. Still, we moderns find it impossible to reconcile the practice of slavery with the gospel of love and freedom. Consequently, many questions arise (in the modern mind, at least) about the way Paul handled the issue of slavery. He did not condemn or forbid it, and that bothers us. Could he possibly have approved of such a degrading social practice? There was no call for Philemon to take a stand against this evil practice. Not even a call to free Onesimus. He fled as a slave, was converted to Christ, and then returned to Philemon a slave still. What are we to make of Paul's treatment of slavery, and what meaning does it hold for us today?

First, it should be understood that Paul never intended for this personal letter to be treated as a treatise on the social action, or inaction, of the church. It is a letter to a friend and must be interpreted in the context of that relationship. Paul is concerned with the dynamics of personal relationships in Christ, not the strategies of social change. Therefore, to be critical of Paul for his seeming lack of concern over the evils of slavery is to be insensitive to the purpose and context of the letter.

Does this mean, then, that Paul had no feelings about slavery at all? No it does not. As a matter of fact, his feelings are quite clear. He sends Onesimus back to Philemon expecting him to be a better slave in the future than he was in the past. Is this to be taken as Paul's approval of the institution of slavery? Once again, the answer is no. What it does mean is that in Philemon, as H. M. Carson has observed, "the master-slave relationship is not denied; but it is caught up into a new relationship which transmutes the former. Onesimus is to be received no longer as a slave, but as a brother." Paul understood that spiritual relationships transcend worldly relationships. His underlying belief, as he expressed elsewhere, was that in Christ there was neither "bond nor free." In Christ all people were from sin, the cruelest master of all. In Christ, all were freedmen. This truth provides the basis for Paul's appeal in verses 15-16. "that you might receive him forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave—a beloved brother...."

What can Christians today learn from this letter as we struggle to formulate our own responses to the social issues confronting us? First, we understand that this little letter does not represent all the Bible has to say about believers and social issues. In the past it has not been uncommon to hear some observe that since Paul did not take a clear stand against slavery in Philemon, then the church today has no business getting involved in social issues. Some have even equated social activism with the preaching of a "social gospel." As a result, the church has had little or no involvement in correcting the ills of our society. However, there is more to the Bible's teaching regarding this matter than the letter to Philemon. For instance, even a casual reading of the Old Testament reveals that God is greatly concerned with social injustice. God often declares His favor for the oppressed and defenseless and pronounces His judgment upon the oppressors and the unjust. A New Testament parallel to this Old Testament concern is James 1:27. What we find, then, is that God is the ultimate social activist! Thus, Paul's remarks to Philemon must be viewed in the overall context of Scripture rather than as the sum total of what Scripture has to say about the believer's response to social issues.

Second, it does not appear to be Paul's conviction that enduring change is best affected by preaching than by political activism. Philemon is not the only time Paul dealt with the master-slave relationship. In the books of Ephesians and Colossians he also expresses concern about relationships between Christian masters and Christian slaves. Never does he appeal to the political process in any of these letters; he does appeal to his reader's spiritual sensitivities. He appeals to their hearts. Change had to come voluntarily and from within the individuals whose hearts had been changed by the proclaimed word of God's love and grace. Does this mean that the Christian should not be involved in politics? Not at all. Believers have often used politics effectively as a means of doing good and glorifying God. However, political activism as means of bringing about social change has its limitations, one being that it cannot reform the hearts and characters of individuals. The gospel of God's grace in Christ can. Paul understood that, under the compulsion of grace and love, slavery must ultimately die. The gospel of love carries within it the seed principles that are bound ultimately to undermine the sinful attitudes inherent to all social injustice and cruelty.

A third lesson for the modern believer is that whatever one's station in life may be, it can and must be used to glorify God. Philemon, the wealthy slaveowner, is commended for his faith, love and hospitality (Phile. 4-5,7). Paul then expresses his confidence that Philemon will do even more in regard to Onesimus than he has been asked (Phile. 21). Such diligence in discipleship is a source of joy for Paul. As for Onesimus, he had been an unprofitable slave out of Christ. Now, in Christ, he is profitable to both Philemon and Paul. Both Philemon and Onesimus served and glorified God in their respective positions. For today's Christian it is no different. Employer or employee, wealthy or poor, our station in life is an opportunity for glorifying God.

Finally, Philemon teaches us that all social barriers are eradicated in Christ. In Him we are one family, brothers and sisters all. In Christ Philemon and Onesimus had together been lifted to a higher plane, a plane of brotherhood and oneness. Now they were both slaves...slaves to Jesus Christ.

Paul dealt with slavery in the context of his own time and culture. Rather than appealing to political activism, civil disobedience, or rebellion he chose instead to appeal to the power of love and spiritual equality in Christ. In the context of our own time and culture other strategies may be available to us, but the underlying principles remain the same. We are to see all people through the eyes of love and compassion, and loving people we will share with them the good news that all people are one in Christ. The people of God must be sensitive to the social injustices and inequities all around us, and we must address them with the conviction that complete and enduring reformation is accomplished only through the gospel of grace. ■

[PO Box 1219, Yadkinville, NC 27055]

"Like Good Christians": A Study in Diplomacy

By Walter B. Edwards

The late Warren R. Austin was an American politician, diplomat and delegate to the United Nations from 1947 to 1953. During a debate on the seemingly unsolvable Middle East question, he exhorted the warring **Jews** and **Arabs** to sit down and settle their differences "like good Christians"! I can imagine their response, can't you?

Time after time the people of God need to use diplomacy. Elders need to use diplomacy when trying to restore a delinquent brother, or when struggling to resolve differences among members of the Body who are at odds with one another. Deacons need to use it when working with members of their committees or ministries. Bible class teachers must be diplomatic when they must restrain a too talkative, dominating class member. Parents use diplomacy in rearing their children. Spouses must as they nurture their relationship. Employees should when a question arises concerning job responsibilities. Jesus said: "Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God" (Matt. 5:9).

Diplomacy is defined as "skill in managing negotiations or handling people so that there is little or no ill will." A diplomat is a person who is "tactful and skillful in managing a delicate situation."

In Paul's letter to Philemon, we have an inspired example of effective diplomacy. The apostle's primary purpose in writing was to persuade Philemon to welcome back his runaway slave, Onesimus. His approach was masterful, and surely it was successful. He laid the groundwork by calling Philemon a dear friend and fellow worker and by telling him that he had been praying for him (vv. 1,4). He then commended Philemon's faith and love and revealed that his love had provided him much joy and encouragement and had refreshed the hearts of the saints (vv. 5,7). Paul wrote these things because they were true and because Philemon deserved commendation, not because he was trying to manipulate his brother in Christ.

In verse 8 the apostle begins his obvious effort to persuade Philemon to receive the slave who is now a fellow Christian. Both are now slaves of their mutual Master, Jesus. Paul chose not to order Philemon to comply. He wanted his action to be "spontaneous and not forced" (v. 14). He sought to convince rather than command, induce rather than insist, coax rather than coerce. At this point, Paul made seven types of diplomatic appeals. First, he appealed from the standpoint of love (v. 9). Second, he wrote as an elderly brother and apostle (v. 9). Third, he reminded that he was a prisoner because of his allegiance to Christ (v. 9). Fourth, he showed Onesimus had been converted by the apostle and thus was a useful brother (vv. 10-11, 16). Fifth, Paul reasoned that Philemon should welcome him as he would Paul himself (v. 17). Sixth, Paul volunteered to pay any obligation that Onesimus might owe (vv. 18-19). Finally,

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he expressed confidence that Philemon would comply (v. 21).

None of us will ever be able to use all of the exact types of appeals Paul did. However, there are principles that can be learned and applied when we seek to be Christian diplomats. First, refrain from ordering when there is any other way. Such may only stimulate resistance. Second, love must always be the primary motivation. Third, use your relationship with the person as leverage to help accomplish the goal. Fourth, appeal to the person's best qualities. Fifth, address the situation honestly and objectively. Sixth, be positive and expect the person to respond. Express your confidence in his willingness to cooperate. Seventh, deal only with facts and not rumors. To intervene based on supposition or hearsay is unfair to the person and will significantly weaken his confidence in you. There was no question about the situation addressed by Paul.

May God give us wisdom as we try to be effective diplomats to His glory and the good of people. ■

[1210 Museum Road, Statesville, NC 28677]

Studies in Philemon

Sin Has Consequences

By Charles W. Fetters

In the book of Ecclesiastes, Chapter 7, Verse 29, Solomon comments on the sin and waywardness of mankind. He says, "Behold this only have I found: that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." One of the greatest tragedies in the experience of mankind is the lost sense of sin. This condition has prevailed throughout the age of Bible history, and it appears that it is ever growing worse in our day (Cf. 2 Tim. 3:1ff). In the greater part of the Christian community people see Christ as a dominant personality, and they see Him, at least theoretically, as the Savior of mankind; but when it comes to the sense of sin from which Christ proposes to save me they have lost sight of sin.

Sin, like everything else which is common to the experience of mankind, had its beginning back in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:9-13). There, in a perfect environment, conducive to a perfect existence, we find one exception. That exception was Satan. His sole aim is, and always has been, to lure as many of God's creatures into rebellion against the Creator as he possibly can. Adam and Eve were not exceptions. One of the characteristics of mankind seems to be a desire to place responsibility for one's own sin on someone else. Adam blamed Eve; but just mark it down, Adam was not beguiled (1 Tim. 2:14). He deliberately chose to follow Eve into sin. God did not accept the excuses of the first human pair and neither will He accept alibis from anyone else. In writing to the churches in Galatia, Paul shows each individual's responsibility (Gal. 6:1-5).

In the Scripture it is made quite clear that individuals are affected by sins committed by others. Yet, the Bible nowhere exonerates the individual of his responsibility for his own sins. There can be no glossing over sin in our lives, nor can we blame others for our sins. In the Genesis account of man's sin against his Creator it is quite evident that the first sin had far reaching consequences.

As we look at the book of Philemon, Bible students are familiar with the scenario. A slave runs away from his master and comes in contact with the apostle Paul. Paul teaches him the gospel, baptizes him, and sends him back to his master. This takes place during a time when slavery was quite prevalent and when slaves outnumbered free men. Though Christianity was not compatible with slavery, it did not specifically condemn slavery as it existed in ancient society. There can be no doubt that Christianity had a tremendous impact on the slave/master relationship and more especially when master and slave were both Christians.

It is of importance to note the historical contrast between the request of Paul and the norm of the time. This is graphically illustrated in a document published in the **Oxyrhynchus**

Papyri, Vol. 14 (1920), No. 1643 (dated A.D. 298). In this document, one named Aurelius Sarapammon wrote to a friend: "I commission you by this writ to journey to the famous city of Alexandria and search for my slave by name...about 35 years old, known to you. When you have found him you shall place him in custody, with authority to shut him up, and to lay a complaint before the proper authorities against any persons who have harbored him, with a demand for satisfaction."

It is important to note that Paul does not demand, or even request the emancipation of Onesimus. In no way does he question the property right of a slave/owner relationship, even though the slave was now a Christian. What Paul does is to put the slave forward as a brother in Christ, one deserving forgiveness, friendship and Christian fellowship. But there is something that I want us to observe: a slave becoming a Christian in no way negates the slave's responsibility to his master. Such a slave must now make his service to his master a service in Christ with conscientious sincerity in everything he does. He must render service to Christ by rendering service to his earthly master with singleness of heart, mind and good will. Even though Onesimus is now a Christian, he still possesses earthly ties as Philemon's slave. We must ever keep in mind that Christianity in no way annuls, nor confounds, respective civil duties, but rather strengthens one's obligation to them.

I want us to focus our attention on Philemon 18 and 19. In these verses it is evident that Onesimus owes Philemon something. We do not know just what that is, but he is still obligated to Philemon. Sin has consequences! Even though Onesimus is free from sin in Christ, he is still obligated as a Christian because of sin. Whatever wrong he is charged with, whatever dues he owes, all took place before he became a Christian, and the fact that he is now a Christian does not free him of these past debts. For sure, every wrong must be repented of and repentance requires restitution in making right any wrong as much as is humanly possible.

Some seem to think that baptism relieves people of any past responsibility or consequences for their sins. But such is far from truth. Those professing repentance must practice repentance and must live a life of repentance. It is not enough to just speak penitent words, one must do works agreeable with those words (Matt. 3:8 and Acts 26:20).

Some seem to think that mere respectability is religion, but it isn't. It seems some think that because God is good, because He is merciful, because He is love, and because He understands, that He is going to overlook the consequences of our transgressions because we have been baptized, or because we have "repented."

Again I would remind us that Onesimus owed his master Philemon for wrongs committed before he was ever converted. Paul indicates that Onesimus is still obligated after his conversion. Since such is the case, would it not seem logical then that a thief, upon becoming a Christian, would be required to return stolen property to its rightful owner? Would not a polygamist, upon conversion, be required to give up his unlawful wives? Would not a person living in an adulterous relationship, upon conversion, be required to remove himself or herself from such an adulterous relationship? **If not, why not?** I am of the persuasion that one repenting of sin would have the same responsibility to make proper restitution as much as is humanly possible.

Sometimes the consequences of one's sin will ever be with him. It can affect one's reputation; it can cause bodily injury; it can injure others. But we have Almighty God to thank that through His Son Jesus Christ we have been promised help as we recognize our weaknesses (1 Cor. 10:13) and as we accept our individual responsibility for our sins (1 John 1:8-10).

When paradise was lost to the first human pair, God immediately took steps to see that those, who would one day do so, could regain paradise again through faithful obedience to His word. So, let us never lose sight, or a sense, of sin and its consequences in our world and in our lives. May we be drawn to God's divine word so that we recognize without any doubt whatsoever that sin has consequences! Jesus Christ came to deliver us from the ultimate consequence of sin, eternal damnation. As the gospel changes hearts, lives, and values, we learn to respect the goodness of God as well as His severity (Rom. 11:22). Thank God for the book of Philemon. ■

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Studies in Philemon

Love Based on Faith: Powerful Motive

By David Vaughn

The power and value of a document is not determined by its length. The New Testament letter from Paul to Philemon has only 335 words, but it is a touching letter written with great skill.

This letter is about confidence, love as a powerful motive, and the power of the gospel to change a human life. There are three main characters: Paul, the aged and imprisoned apostle; Philemon, a Christian brother; and Onesimus, a former slave, who had run away from his master, Philemon.

Paul referred to himself as "the aged, now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus" (v. 9, NASB). In his prayers, Paul expressed thankfulness for faithful lives. He believed in his brothers and was willing to intercede on their behalf—even to the point of stepping between a slave owner and his slave (vv. 15-20). However, because of his respect for Philemon, he does not assume too much (v. 14).

Philemon was a Christian who probably lived in or near Colossae. We know this by comparing Philemon 1-2 with Colossians 4:17, and it seems that Philemon was at the same place as Archippus, whose ministry was in Colossae. Also, Onesimus, the slave of Philemon, is said to be "one of your number" in Colossae (Col. 4:9).

Paul knew much about Philemon calling him "our beloved brother and fellow-worker" and "brother." Paul also knew Philemon provided the meeting place for the local church (v. 2).

After Onesimus ran away his travels eventually took him to Rome where he met Paul who was in prison. We do not know how Paul and Onesimus met, but the apostle taught the useless slave the gospel of Jesus Christ (v. 10, 11). Paul said that Onesimus had been useless to Philemon, "but now is useful both to you and to me" (v. 11). If our conversion does not make us useful, we need to question our conversion! It is great that human worth is not measured only in terms of fame, fortune, and political influence. Perhaps the greatest measure of our value is how much we are needed by some other human being. Onesimus, once useless, is now useful to both Paul and Philemon. God looks at His people and says, "They are useful!" The bond between Paul and Onesimus was strong, but the apostle realized the right thing for Onesimus to do was to return to Philemon (v. 12). This is the background for Paul's letter to Philemon. The purpose of the letter is an appeal to Philemon in behalf of Onesimus.

In verses 7-9 the apostle introduced the purpose of the letter. From these verses we see the powerful appeal of love. Philemon was a man whose faith had been manifested in the marketplace. His faith in God and love for God's people led him to refresh (provide help and comfort) their lives and this brought joy to Paul (v. 7). He had been refreshed (a form of this word is "rest" in Matthew 11:28) by Christ and his faith led him to refresh others. The basic meaning of refresh is "to cool with a breath." In medical terms it meant "to treat a wound with fresh air." Encouragement, physical or spiritual, is under consideration and Paul knew the value of being refreshed because of Onesiphorus (2 Tim. 1:16). The mature Christian always rejoices over the practice of love and good works. It is a breath of fresh air when one does that which brings relief from the pressures and discouragement of the filth and sinfulness of this world.

"Wherefore" in verse 8 refers back to verse 7. The basis of Paul's appeal was the love and faith of Philemon which led him to "serve one another" (Gal. 5:13). Because of Philemon's Christian character Paul does not hesitate to propose that Philemon receive Onesimus as more than just a slave, but as a brother in Christ. Paul had the confidence (authority) in Christ to order Philemon to do this, but the apostle put this matter on the level of Christian love. Paul knew this man's faith worked through love (Gal. 5:6) and believed he would continue to exercise his faith in love when called upon to do so.

The apostle's great regard for Philemon is seen in his belief that Philemon did not have to be moved to godly action by authority, but his actions would be the result of his love for righteousness. To do what is right in the sight of God is a mark of one who has been converted to Christ (1 John 3:22). Philemon's past had been characterized by the principles of Matthew 22:37-40 and his future would continue to be governed by the rule of love. The choice Paul believed Philemon would make would be in harmony with the grace of God which teaches us to "live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age" (Titus 2:11, 12).

Paul was not fearful of pettiness on the part of Philemon and, therefore, he did not hold back in giving frank and open advice on what he thought Philemon ought to do concerning Onesimus. This is why he could write, "for love's sake I appeal to you."

Remember these points from the lesson:

1. Christianity demands forgiveness.
2. Christianity enables one to rise above social conditions and receive, even a slave, as a brother in Christ.
3. Our love for God is reflected in our love for others.
4. A mark of the spiritual person is bringing "fresh air" (useful service) to others.
5. The Christian is always ready for reconciliation.
6. A requirement of Christianity is trust and that we be trustworthy.
7. Motives give power to our actions. ■

[1919 N. New Hope Road, Gastonia, NC 28054]

Studies in Philemon

"Put That To Mine Account"

C. W. Bradley

The words which serve as the topic of this article were written by the apostle Paul in a brief letter to his good friend and brother, Philemon (v. 18). These words demonstrate Paul's willingness to take the part of one for whom the world of that day offered no word of sympathy, understanding or hope—a runaway slave.

A slave was not considered as a person but a mere tool. Masters had total power over their slaves. They could beat them and even put them to death. To speak of "human rights" for a slave was unheard of because salves had no rights.

Onesimus, a Runaway Slave

Onesimus had committed one of the most serious crimes possible in the eyes of Roman law—he had run away from his master. If recovered, Philemon might have branded the letter "F" on his forehead with a hot iron signifying that he was a fugitive. Thus all who saw him would know what he had done. Or if Philemon had so desired, he could have legally put him to death by crucifixion and no one would have lifted a finger to save him.

Somehow Onesimus ended up in the city of Rome where the aged Paul was being held as a prisoner for preaching Christ. We do not know the details of why or how, but fortunately for this weary slave, he made contact with Paul. Whether or not they had met before, we cannot know. It is possible that Onesimus had heard his master speak of Paul.

As a result of meeting Paul, Onesimus would never again be the same. Don't we wish that we might have listened in on their conversations? I can imagine that I can hear Paul relating something of his past life and how Jesus Christ had completely transformed him. How intently Onesimus must have listened as Paul told him that as a result of Christ's death on the cross all, no matter who they were or what they had done, might be made free from sin.

Gradually, this downtrodden nobody began to develop a new image of himself. Paul helped him to see that he was somebody whom God loved and wanted to ise in His kingdom. What great rejoicing there must have been when Onesimus was baptized?

A Blessed Fellowship

Following his obedience to the gospel, Onesimus continued with Paul ministering to his needs. Their love for each other grew constantly. Paul must have been thrilled by the changes he saw taking place in the life of his new convert. He had a deep longing to keep him with him.

Eventually, Paul's conscience began to gnaw him. As much as he hated to part with his new friend and brother, he knew that Onesimus must return home and make things right with his master. Yes, he was now a freeman in Christ, but he was still Philemon's slave.

How would Philemon receive his runaway slave? Would he punish him and, if so, in what way? Could he be persuaded to show compassion if he received a request from his dear friend and brother, Paul? It was certainly worth trying.

Paul wants Philemon to know that Onesimus is returning home, not only as a slave, but also as a brother in the Lord. Of course Onesimus had wronged his master in running away. Perhaps he had stolen enough money to enable him to get to Rome. Certainly his absence had deprived Philemon of his service.

Paul tenderly appeals to Philemon to deal kindly with his runaway slave. He personally offers to pay for whatever wrongs Onesimus had done. It was in this connection that he wrote, "Put that to mine account." He was willing to assume full responsibility for Onesimus's wrongdoing. If Onesimus must suffer, Paul was willing to suffer with him.

Home Again

We can only imagine the scene when Onesimus stood facing his master. No details are given. We do not know how he was received by Philemon. Was he punished? If so, in what manner?

Although I can offer no proof, I still like to imagine that I see a slave and his master hugging and weeping and forgiving. I also like to imagine that on the following Lord's day, the church which met in Philemon's house welcomed a new brother into their fellowship. I can even imagine that before much time had passed, brother Onesimus was helping serve the Lord's supper.

Most Bible scholars believe that Philemon lived in the city of Colossae. The general view is that Tychicus returned with Onesimus bringing not only the letter to Philemon but also a letter from Paul to the church in Colossae. In that letter, Paul wrote, "All my affairs shall Tychicus make known unto you, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord: whom I have sent unto you for this very purpose, that ye may know our state, and that he may comfort your hearts; together with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things that are done here" (Col. 4:7-9, ASV). Thus Paul wanted the entire church in Colossae to welcome and encourage this new Christian.

A Present Day Application

Does Paul's letter to Philemon regarding the return of a runaway slave who had become a Christian have anything to say to Christians in the closing years of the 20th century? Does Paul's attitude toward Onesimus have an application for us regarding our attitude toward and treatment of various groups among us?

Must we not admit that some serious flaws exist in our relationships between man and man, class and class, race and race? Admittedly, some progress has been made over the past several years, but is there not still much more progress that needs to be made? Our knowledge of what is right exceeds our willingness to practice what is right. Let me illustrate by relating a personal experience.

What I now relate happened almost a half century ago and I would like to think that such would not take place anywhere in our brotherhood today. Those involved were good people and did not intentionally mean to manifest unchristian attitudes, but found themselves in a situation which they did not know how to properly handle. They let fear cause them to react in a manner which should make us all ashamed.

The incident took place during the annual Carolina lectures. Preachers and other Christians travelled many miles with the hope of being spiritually renewed by participating in the program which had been planned by the host congregation. In those days, the congregations in the Carolinas were widely scattered and attending the lectures each year served as a real oasis in a spiritual desert. On the opening morning we were all enjoying the warmth of a close fellowship—and then it happened! A black preacher entered the auditorium. He, too, had travelled several miles seeking to be encouraged and strengthened. However, he soon learned that he would not be permitted to sit in the auditorium; he must go to the basement and listen through an extended sound system.

Throughout the week, another preacher, a white brother, O. P. Baird, quietly made his way to the basement to sit with and encourage his black brother in the Lord. More insult was added as we ate lunch each day in a nearby park. The only way our black brother could be with us was by assuming the role of being present to help with the children.

At that time I was a young preacher with very little experience, but I knew that such treatment of another brother in Christ was inconsistent with what we preached and was wrong. Today as I look back, I regret that I did not have the courage and the strength to take my place with my two brothers in the basement. I wish I could say that at that time I manifested Paul's attitude when he said, "Put that to mine account." ■

Editor's Note: C. W. Bradley is well known in the Carolinas for his work there in years past. He now works with the church in Olive Branch, Mississippi. His home address is: 2763 Castleman, Memphis, TN 38118.

Studies in Philemon

A New Relationship

By Ernest J. Richards, Jr.

"For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?" (Phile. 15-16).

The apostle Paul in this book writes about a troublesome slave named Onesimus, who after fleeing from his master Philemon was now returning home (vv. 11-12). However, the Onesimus that was returning was not the same Onesimus that left. A major change had taken place. Onesimus was a different man and this change would forever alter his relationship with Philemon (v. 15).

The change that took place in the life of Onesimus was his transformation from a troubled sinner into a child of God (cf. John 3:3-7). This change meant that he would be more than just a slave to Philemon, he would be "a brother beloved" (vv. 16; cf. Gal. 3:27-28). Those that are in Christ share a common kinship as brothers and sisters with one heavenly Father, one faith, one purpose, one goal (Eph. 4:4-6). This relationship in Christ is one that transcends and takes precedence over all earthly relationships. The spiritual relationship in Christ is a matter of salvation since only those who are in the family of Christ will be saved (Eph. 5:23). For this reason alone it is more important than the employee-employer relationship, parent-child relationship, husband-wife relationship or any other connection we might have.

Furthermore, the Christian relationship is intended to be of a never-ending nature. Paul suggests that the departure of Onesimus may have been a matter of God's providence which resulted in his conversion and endless fraternity with Philemon (v. 15). The relationship between faithful members of Christ's church is designed to endure throughout eternity (1 Thess. 4:13-18). No other relationship on earth is so designed. Because of this, members of the church need to learn to get along with each other while on earth. In heaven there will be no fussing and feuding (Rev. 21:3-4). Therefore, if we expect to maintain an eternal relationship with our brethren, we must now seek to live in peaceful accord, united by God's word (Rom. 12:16-18; 1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:2-3).

Once Onesimus became a brother in Christ instead of a mere slave, there would undoubtedly be a noticeable difference in his interaction with Philemon. Perhaps the greatest change would be demonstrated by Onesimus towards Philemon instead of the other way around. This would likely be so since Philemon was already a Christian (vv. 1-7).

There are a number of things that characterize a spiritual relationship in Christ and such would no doubt have been a part of Onesimus and Philemon's relationship. God's children have a natural love for one another (1 Pet. 1:22; 1 John 4:7). Brethren do whatever they can to assist their fellow brothers and sisters (Rom. 12:11-13; Gal. 6:10). They encourage and pray for each other (Heb. 10:24; James 5:16). Christians are careful not to hurt or destroy fellow members (Matt. 7:12; Rom. 14:13-21). With this and more being characteristic of Christian brothers and sisters it is no surprise that one will always find all other relationships enhanced and blessed when a spiritual kinship of this sort is shared. Such was evidently the case with Onesimus and Philemon, and also the apostle Paul (v. 16). May many others also come to know the blessedness that can be shared among men as a result of a new relationship in Christ! ■

[1722 B Ave., West Columbia, SC 29169]

Studies in Philemon

Reflections on the Golden Rule

By Bob Bickle

"But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly" (Phile. 14).Onesimus, a runaway slave, rightfully belonged to Philemon. He was not the same man who had fled from his master. He had been taught the gospel of Christ, and was now a child of God, a brother in Christ. The apostle Paul wanted to dothe right thing. Unfortunately the Roman system of slavery gave the slave owner the right to completely own his slave. Onesimus was the property of Philemon.Paul wanted to keep Onesimus with him. Paul was a prisoner and Onesimus was profitable to him (v. 11). In verse 12 Paul wrote that he was sending Onesimus back to Philemon. In verse 13 he stated his desire to keep Onesimus "but without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary" (NKJV).

It would not have been proper to keep Philemon's slave without his permission. Paul was putting into practice the teachings of Jesus. "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 7:12).

Of all of Christ's teachings, this is perhaps the best known, yet the least practiced. What is it that keeps us from keeping the "Golden Rule?" The apostle Paul wrote, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:7-8).

Self is the problem. Jesus taught us, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39). Could it be that we do not do unto others as we would want them to do unto us because we spend so much time thinking of ourselves, thus not transferring our thoughts to the other person. Listen to the language of self! "I have my needs and my rights and my desires that must be met. If these are all met, then, perhaps, I'll have time to consider the needs of others."

Self-centeredness leads to self-satisfaction, self-protection, and self-concern. God in-

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terferes with this self-centeredness and independence. Man likes to think of himself as completely autonomous and self-sufficient, but God challenges those thoughts.

Just imagine the labor disputes that could be settled by implementing the Golden Rule! Think of the disputes between nations that begin with "my country," "my rights," with the other nations saying the same things. Because of our self-centeredness, there are wars that shall always be with us. "Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members" (James 4:1)?

How can this marvelous teaching of Jesus be implemented? It must start with God! Jesus teaches us that we must "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37). Then He said we must love our neighbors (Matt. 22:39). We must see God with all of His holiness and power, then we become humbled before Him.

With this humility we see others as they are. They are like we are! We're both in a predicament. We desperately need to run to Christ and avail ourselves of His wonderful grace. It is when we are really loving our neighbors as ourselves that we begin to enjoy the liberty of the children of God.

When we observe human beings in their relationship to God, destined for eternity, it's not difficult to implement the Golden Rule. It is at that point that one is delivered from self and its tyranny and begins to see men and women with a new eye in a different way.

The golden rule makes all men equal. How we wish to be treated is how we should treat others. All people—the wealthy, famous, and powerful (even Philemon the slave owner) as well as the poor, unknown, and unimportant (even Onesimus the slave)—all are to treat each other just as they wish to be treated.

Paul, with the authority of an apostle, could have commanded Philemon to treat Onesimus correctly but he did not. Instead he appealed to his sense of love and compassion. He even offered to repay the debt that Onesimus owned Philemon. Why would he do this? Because love is a higher motive for doing things than commands will ever be. The higher the motives for something, the more genuine that action becomes. The more genuine it is, the more people will respond to it. Let us learn the secret of implementing the Golden Rule of Jesus! ■

[339 Charlotte Ave., Rock Hill, SC 29730.]

The Duncan Church of Christ: Sixty Years Old

By Robert Curry

The Duncan Church of Christ is sixty years old. To commemorate this anniversary the congregation will be having a homecoming and Gospel Meeting May 1-5. Any and all former members are invited to come and join us in this time of nostalgia and fellowship.

The speakers for the Gospel Meeting will be **Joe DeYoung** of North Dakota and **Leland Rodgers** of Texas. Both men were raised in the Duncan congregation and have enjoyed many years as preachers of God's word in the mission field and local work. We are sure that these fine men will add much to these events.

Come join us for our fellowship dinner the afternoon of May 2, followed by our "evening" service at 2:30. Each weeknight service will begin at 7:30.

We look forward to seeing you.

[Robert is the minister for the Duncan Church. Contact him at PO Box 728, Duncan, SC 29334.]

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Brotherhood News

By Dennis Conner

The WEST JEFFERSON CHURCH OF CHRIST in West Jefferson, NC, set a Sunday morning attendance record of 122 on February 28. The occasion was Friend Day and the goal had been set at 90. The preacher there is David Allgood...TIM JORGENSON is the new preacher for the PLAZA CHURCH OF CHRIST in Sumter, SC. Tim is originally from Texas and comes to Sumter after recently receiving a Masters degree from Harding University Graduate School of Religion...MIKE HINRICHS is now the full-time evangelist for the TWIN CITY CHURCH in Batesburg, SC. Brother Hinrich's had been preaching for the church on a part-time basis for the past three years...TENNESSEE BIBLE COLLEGE will conduct its 13th annual lectureship May 2-6, 1993, on its campus in Cookeville, TN. The theme will be "Troublers of Spiritual Israel"...The 11th annual Great Smoky Mountain Lectureship will be conducted October 15-17, 1993, at the GATLINBURG CHURCH OF CHRIST in Gatlinburg, TN. For more information contact: David Hill at Tennessee Bible College, PO Box 865, Cookeville, TN 38503-0865. ■

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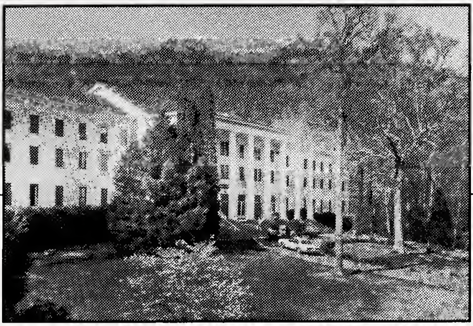

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

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"If anyone wants to love life and see good days he must restrain his tongue from evil and his lips from deceit; he must turn from wrong and do good, seek peace and pursue it. The Lord has eyes for the righteous, and ears open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is set against wrongdoers."

(1 Peter 3:10-12, REB)

Editorial

By David Pharr

MAY 11 MARKS the fifth anniversary of Howard Winters's death. He had served as editor of **Carolina Christian** for almost twenty years. In January 1988 we published a special issue in tribute to him. At that time we were trying to be optimistic that he could overcome the cancer that had invaded his body. We hoped that by God's grace Howard had books yet to write, more issues to edit, and many more sermons to preach. But sadly for us it was not to be.

In this, my last editorial for **Carolina Christian,** I want to repeat some of the thoughts written about brother Winters back in January 1988. His legacy should not be forgotten.

"Unselfish" perhaps best described Howard's approach to life and work. He had little concern for what is luxurious or fancy. He was a common man with common tastes. His only dreams of greatness were for the glory of Christ's kingdom. The world will take little note of his accomplishments, because he cared little for the world's ambitions. Instead he has sought success by the unworldly rule that it is more blessed to give then to receive.

What contributions did he make to the church in the twentieth century? Only God can answer. Gospel sermons do not build stone monuments, but they may affect lives of people not yet born. Authors write for a few years, then lay down their pens forever; but their books may yet teach in distant times and faraway places. History has had more prolific writers, but few of us have been contemporary with anyone who has written as much as well and as helpfully as did brother Winters. Howard Winters loved the truth. He had been converted out of denominationalism. He was bold in his stand against error. He was powerful in his defense of the gospel. He was not embarrassed to speak of the pattern for the church in the New Testament.

Included in a tribute by Guy N. Woods was the following: "It is not unusual to find men in the ministry of inquiring minds and of studious habits who find the pursuit of knowledge an enjoyable and exciting hobby, but whose aim is simply and solely the acquisition of knowledge— not its proper and practical use of blessing and benefitting mankind. These men may properly be called 'bookworms,' for this they are, one of which Howard Winters is not! I have long been impressed with the fact that brother Winters appreciates books and is a persistent student of them because he loves and values truth above all else, and in acquiring it from his books, is thereby more able to preach and teach New Testament Christianity.

"For many years he has collected and distributed books and, frequently at his own expense, through a generosity he could often ill-afford, he has shared them with others, because he is greatly desirous of making the work

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION STAFF

David Pharr, Editor; Johnny Melton, Managing Editor; Dennis Conner, News Editor.

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of others, as well as his own, more potent and powerful. One of the unique and wonderful characteristics of this great and good man has been this disposition, and many preachers, young and old, have been the recipients of his benefactions. Books, and the truth they contain, are more valuable to him than money, and he has dispensed them as a philanthropist distributes his material possessions, for the good of mankind not only here, but throughout the great hereafter, and for this he will be richly rewarded.

"Lately, in the columns of the **Carolina Christian**, brother Winters has been writing in detail of the persons and principles of the Restoration movement—articles which demonstrate thorough familiarity with, and a deep sympathy for that effort. In this he is performing valuable service for a brotherhood perilously teetering toward apostasy, and whose call for a pure faith and an unquestionable practice in all matters is in many place muted. While some among us would attempt to move away from the basic goals and aims of the men who launched and, at great personal expense and much sacrifice, built the movement into a powerful and far-reaching promotion of the Cause we love, he is seeking to call brethren back to those aims and goals having their origin in the pure Christianity of the first century." (The writing to which brother Woods refers is in the book **Up To Bethany**.)

Franklin Camp has himself since passed away, but he wrote of his appreciation for Howard: "Gospel preaching begins with the heart. One must have a heart of compassion if one preaches to please God. God's great compassion for man must reach deep into the recesses of the heart to prepare one to have compassion for a lost world. 'We love him because he first loved us' (1 John 4:19). Howard has a profound awareness of God's love. His heart was touched by the wonders of God's love which helped him realize his own unworthiness. It was the marvelous love of God that led him to give his life to preaching. He preaches because he loves God, not for worldly fame or wealth.

"His love for God gives him a heart of compassion for the rich and the poor, the high and low, for friend and foe. I have never heard him speak an unkind word of anyone. When he is criticized, if he thinks an answer is called for, he does it with dignity and kindness. Ugliness, harshness and a critical spirit are foreign to his character.

"Brother Winters understands the importance of balance in preaching. Some equate balance with softness and compromise. This is a misunderstanding of the term. A synonym is equilibrium. Balanced preaching does not ignore error. Balanced preaching includes rebuke when necessary. Howard avoid extremes. One of the things that has impressed me with him is his grasp of the principles of the restoration.... One of the major problems of the restoration is distinguishing between matters of faith and judgment. One becomes unbalanced when one's scruples are made matters of faith. It is the grasp of these principles that gives him the ability to hold on to truth and avoid the extreme of binding where the Bible does not bind, or loosing where the Bible has bound. He knows when a matter of faith must not be sacrificed, and how to disagree over a matter of judgment without being divisive."

We have reprinted three articles by brother Winters. They are worthy of thoughtful attention. They are as appropriate now as when they were written—if not more so. I have selected these articles from among hundreds of worthy ones because first they deal with some matters that are of great concern to me and because they provide valuable insight on some important issues.

Thank You

As announced last month this will be my last issue as editor, a position I have enjoyed for five years. With an ongoing love for the cause of Christ in the Carolinas, I have especially appreciated this means of staying in touch. I am grateful to the board of directors for giving me this opportunity. Johnny Melton has been capable and tireless as managing editor, handling the business and mechanical duties, as well as writing a column each month. For many years Bill Smith has handled the mailing chores. Sara Johnson, my secretary at East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions has been invaluable in putting the copy on the computer each month. Producing a magazine requires the cooperative effort of several people.

Those who have read the magazine have

given purpose to our efforts. Thank you for letting me share my thoughts with you. And, thank you to all who have called, written and spoken to me in such kind and encouraging ways since my resignation from the magazine was made known. God bless you all in every good work.

From November 1975:

Restoration and Liberalism

By Howard Winters

IS HISTORY REPEATING itself? Maybe not exactly, but 100 years ago the Restoration Movement was brought almost to a standstill because there was an internal death or life struggle over the spirit that would eventually lead to blatant liberalism. There was a clash then as now between the "progressives" and the "conservatives." On the "progressive" side were men such as Isaac Errett and W. T. Moore, who were trying to educate the church up to the level of an ecumenical unity with denominationalism. On the "conservative" side were men such as Ben Franklin and David Lipscomb, who led the battle for a renewed zeal for and devotion to the restoration principles. By 1900 the issues had resulted in a complete severing of fellowship and open division. The "progressives" became known as the Disciples of Christ (who abandoned the plea and rejected the Bible as the revealed will of God to man) and the Christian Church (who has held the reins somewhat by taking a dose of both positions); the "conservatives" continued to make the original plea and build churches patterned after the New Testament order.

Now within the churches of Christ the same seed has been sown again and the battle must be fought all over. Liberalism (sometimes only in embryonic form) is making a renewed effort to destroy the church. Moses E. Lard described the situation 110 years ago and his words fit today exactly as they did then. He said, "He is a poor observer of men and things who does not see slowly growing up among us a class of men who can no longer be satisfied with the ancient gospel and the ancient order of things. These men must have changes; and silently they are preparing the mind of the brotherhood to receive changes." (Quoted by Earl West, **The Search for the Ancient Order,** Vol. 2, p. 131.) Now where will the present clamor for change lead? Precisely where it led 100 years ago—to apostasy and division and the formation of a new denomination. When the Bible as the sole source of faith and practice is surrendered, the restoration plea cannot survive. But for lovers of truth, there is hope: 100 years ago some men and churches stood firm for the old paths and resisted the glamour and pride of liberalism. And there are some men and churches who will stand true to God today. Without doubt, the restoration plea will continue to be made, but the time of purging has come. The next quarter of this century will be times that will try men's faith. Only the judgment will reveal the faithful who stand.

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From December 1986:

Covered by Grace or by Blood?

By Howard Winters

NEW ISSUES BRING new and different ways of expressing our concepts. Currently there is a vast movement under way to try to justify our differences in religious matters (whether great or small) and even some apparent violations of God's law by saying that some differences and violations must be covered by grace or else we will all be lost. This must be the case because no man living is one hundred percent right in either conclusion or practice. Thus if grace does not cover some faults and mistaken conclusions, and even some errors in practice and deviations from the Scriptural standard, there is no hope for anyone. While we think we know what brethren (and many of them are the best God has on earth today) mean by "covered by grace," we neither like the expression nor do we use it as relating to man's weaknesses and sins of ignorance. We think the expression and the way it is being used point up a need for us to refine our vocabulary—to find a more suitable expression for the thought we are trying to convey.

There can be no question but that man is weak, ignorant, and plagued with a severe inability to live above sin, that is, to be absolutely perfect in both thought and action (cf. 1 John 1:8-10). Nor can there be a smattering of doubt that we are saved, if saved at all, by the rich and marvelous grace of God (Eph. 2:8, 9; Titus 2:11, 12). And it is equally as certain that there just be some means by which the weak and sincere who differ on certain subjects can be saved. Thus we think that there can be no question whatsoever but that God, by His endless grace and mercy, has provided the means of covering some imperfections in the life of Christians, and this must include some sins not specifically repented of because they are sins not specifically known. This security, the knowledge that if one continues to trust in Christ his sins of weaknesses and ignorance will be forgiven (not ignored) by some means provided for in God's great scheme of redemption, is one of the believer's greatest consolations. One is simply not required to live in fear that there might be something in his life, unknown to him, out of harmony with the will of God, that may cause him to be lost. No man can do better than to sincerely live the best he knows, than to do what he honestly believes is right to do. We think such a one has an attitude of repentance, that is, he would gladly turn away from any sin in his life if he knew about it. He is consumed with a desire to do God's will in all things. He knows, therefore, that when he walks in the light the blood of Christ keeps on cleansing him from sin (1 John 1:7). But is it correct to say that God's grace covers these sins? Perhaps in a sense, but not in the sense that many appear to be using it today.

To say that a sin is covered by grace (or so it appears to us) is to say that God overlooks it, ignores it, shows tolerance or leniency toward it, does not regard it as serious (does not count it as sin), or else turns His back on it, sweeps it under the rug and thus treats it, not as an offense against His holiness, not as a violation of His divine law, not as a dethroning of God and an enthroning of man as his own ruler, but as a matter too light for divine notice or concern—just humans being human type of behavior. This kind of concept minimizes the serious nature of sin, destroys the force of law, and makes God unjust by shrugging His shoulders at and closing His eyes to some sins while condemning others. This simply cannot be the case, regardless of how small, harmless, or insignificant we may think a sin is. Sin, all sin, is serious. And it always involves both the wrath and grace of God—wrath against it and grace to provide the means of escape from it. It is not, however, the function of grace to cover sins, but to provide the means by which they are to be covered or forgiven. And the means is the shed blood of Christ. Only forgiven sins are covered sins.

Thus to be more precise and to more accurately express what we mean, we should drop the expression "covered by grace" and use in its stead "covered by blood," the blood of Christ, shed to pay the awful price for sin. When a sin is covered by blood it is forgiven, not simply overlooked or ignored. Its true nature is recognized rather than compromised. The only sin man will not have to account for, not have to pay the penalty of, is the one covered by blood (forgiven). Make no mistake about it, grace provides the covering (blood) for sins. But if God had been able to cover it without the blood (without the penalty being paid), Christ would not have died. Let us not, therefore, minimize the seriousness of sin by confusing terms: grace provides the covering for sins but it in and of itself does not cover them (in the sense of overlooking or disregarding the fact that they are a violation of heaven's holy law). God simply does not tolerate sin. It is either forgiven (covered by blood) or else it condemns. Any notion of tolerance of sin (regardless of how high our motives might be in so thinking or how concerned we might be for those involved) cheapens the great price paid for its redemption at Calvary. One is not required to be perfect to stand justified before God, but in order to do so he must have every sin covered by the Redeemer's blood. This is man's only hope.

From May 1987:

Destroying the Bible

By Howard Winters

IT IS SAID THAT THERE are more ways than one to skin a cat; there are also more ways than one to destroy the Bible.

Jeremiah prophesied in a time of apostasy and warned Israel (and occasionally Judah) of pending destruction which was coming upon it because the leaders and prophets, as well as the people, had abandoned the word of God and had committed adultery with stones and with stocks (Jer. 3:9). That is, they had turned from the living God and His revelation to dead gods (gods made of stones and sticks) which could not speak. An indication of the extent of their departure can be gleaned from the incident where king Jehoiakim cut to pieces and burned the scroll containing the Lord's words through Jeremiah. "Now the king sat in the winter house in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him. And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth" (Jer. 36:22,23).

It is sad to read of such disrespect for the word of God among the leaders of Israel, but the next verse is even sadder. It says, "Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words." What we have revealed here is a reprobate attitude—the king cut to pieces and burned the word of God and yet none of them were afraid; none of them feared the terrible consequences which must follow such irreverence and disrespect for the holy. How far they had departed from the days of yore when God had brought them out of Egypt, across the Red Sea, through the wilderness, over the Jordan, and placed them safely in the land which flowed with milk and honey. What a sad commentary on a nation so blessed by divine love to have to say that it no longer feared God nor trembled at the destruction of His word.

But are the majority of men different in our day? Not in the least. While they do not destroy the Bible by literally cutting it to pieces and burning it (even Catholicism has discontinued this vile practice), they do so by false interpretation and application, by denying its inspiration and inerrancy, by changing and modifying its doctrines, by substituting eisegesis for exegesis, by adding to or taking from its holy teaching for the purpose of making it fit the creeds and doctrines of men, by applying the historical-critical method while ignoring the historical-grammatical approach, by practicing what it does not teach rather than to limit themselves to doing only what it says, by making it conflict in its doctrine of grace and its doctrine of obedience, by seeing it as only a human record of historical events, by changing it to fit man's desires rather than accepting it as filling his needs, and by a thousand other ways of rejecting it for the purpose of replacing its divine teaching with the systems of men. This method of destruction is usually more effective than destruction by knife and fire.

Interim Editor Named

By Dennis Conner

AS FAITHFUL READERS of **Carolina Christian** are aware, in the the April issue brother David Pharr announced his resignation as editor of the magazine. While the Board of Directors accepted brother Pharr's resignation, it was with great regret and he remains a cherished friend.

David Pharr has been a force for the cause of Christ in the Carolinas for many years. As the preacher for the Charlotte Avenue church in Rock Hill, SC, he enjoyed one of the longest tenures of any preacher in the history of the churches of Christ in the Carolinas. He is highly respected as a keen student of Scripture and has done a marvelous work as Director of the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions in Knoxville, TN. In addition to serving as Editor of **Carolina Christian** for five years, brother Pharr served as interim Editor during the final months of brother Howard Winters's illness. Because of good works like these, and many others, David Pharr has made a great and lasting impact on the kingdom work in the Carolinas. While we are aware that others will read into brother Pharr's resignation what they will, the Board of Directors is deeply appreciative of his work and his love for the church. We pray God's richest blessings upon his continued service in the great cause that we all love and to which we are committed.

At this time the Board wishes to announce that brother Johnny Melton has been named as Editor of **Carolina Christian** on an interim basis. Brother Melton is no stranger to Christians in the Carolinas and readers of the magazine. For eighteen years he has served as Guest Editor of an annual special issue of the paper. For the past five years he has served as Managing Editor, not only writing a regular column but also getting the paper ready for the printer each month. Brother Melton preaches for the Church of Christ on Fairgrove Church Road in Hickory, NC. In addition to his local ministry and his work with **Carolina Christian**, brother Melton also teaches for Southern Christian University and serves on the Board of Directors of Carolina Bible Camp and Retreat Center, Inc. Those who know him well are aware of his passion for truth and respect his abilities as a student of the Word. Brother Melton will begin his work as interim Editor with the June issue.

Transitions are seldom easy. Besides the speculations which always accompany transitions, there are the more practical matters of personal style, necessary personnel changes, etc., that must be negotiated. We appeal to all of our readers to forbear during these changes. We ask for your support, your patience, and your prayers. **Carolina Christian** will continue faithfully in its pursuit of biblical truth and its promotion of the cause of Christ in the Carolinas. It is our hope that all of our readers will continue the journey with us.

[Dennis is Chairman of the Board of Directors of Carolina Christian Publications, Inc.]

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Homosexuality: Modern Society and the Ancient Text (Part Two)*

By Tim Sensing

SINCE PRO-HOMOSEXUAL advocates are interpreting the Bible either to support their position or to claim its irrelevance, it is time to examine again the Old Testament understanding of homosexuality.

In Genesis 1:27-28, God created people male and female. They were to be fruitful and to multiply. This affirms heterosexuality. God created a woman for the man, and they were to become one flesh (Genesis 2:18-24). Regardless of how you feel, the distinction of male and female is one God made.

Does Genesis 19 condemn Sodom for homosexual sex acts? "They called Lot, 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them.'"

Sodom was guilty of many sins (Deut. 29:23; Is. 3:9; Jer. 23:14; Lam. 4:6; Ezra 16:46-48; Matt. 10:15; 2 Pet. 2:6; Jude 7). However, they were not guilty nor condemned, as some say, for wanting to get acquainted with the three guests in Lot's house. Many recent interpreters have argued that the sin of Sodom is not homosexuality, but a breaking of ancient oriental rules of hospitality. They argue that the word translated "know" occurs 943 times in the OT but only 14 times with the meaning "to have intercourse with." Elsewhere it means "to get acquainted with" or "to have knowledge of." However, Bible translation is determined more by context than mere word counting. They were condemned for wanting to know (have sex with) them. This is the same word used in the same context when Lot told the men of Sodom that they could "know" his daughters instead because the daughters had never "known" a man (Gen. 19:6-8).

The actual attempted offense at Sodom was homosexual rape, probably not precipitated by sexual preference but by the desire to humiliate the visitors and bring them into submission (a common practice in the ancient world; still present, e.g., among prison populations). The entire context indicates homosexual behavior. Since homosexual rape is the sin indicated, this is not the best text to use. Many advocates of homosexuality will easily dismiss this text on the grounds that the text is silent concerning two mutually consenting adults engaging in same-sex relations. They too will condemn the abuses of homosexual rape, homosexual promiscuity and homosexual infidelity.

The Mosaic Law dealt specifically with homosexuality. Leviticus 18:22 states, "You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination." Leviticus 20:13 adds, "If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them."

Usually, these texts are dismissed by homosexual advocates by associating them with cultic sins only. Such activities were proscribed in Israel in order to separate the people of God from the idolatry of Egypt and Canaan (where sexual activity, including homosexual activity, was employed in worship). However, "Abominations" are not limited to cultic sin (cf. Jer. 7:8-10). To suggest that all of the issues in these chapters of Leviticus (including, e.g., incest and child sacrifice; See Lev. 18:21, 23) are condemned only because they were practiced by foreigners, as though the activities themselves are not of material concern, is untenable.

A second reason Moses is dismissed is by arguing for the passing of the old covenant. As new covenant believers we are no longer under the old covenant. However, we are also not under food laws and the sacrificial system. Even though the OT itself does not make a distinction between the ceremonial law and the moral law, the moral nature of God has never changed. This is seen clearly in regard to homosexuality because the NT echoes the same commands.

The Levitical laws had to do with protecting and preserving sexual and familial relationships. Humanity exists only in a condition of limitation, where every aspect of life is distorted by imperfection and sin. Homosexuality is condemned under the Law and carried the death penalty. In fact, all sex that deviates from the heterosexual act within marriage is condemned: adultery, harlotry and other relationships (See Ex. 20:14; 21:7, 9; Deut. 23:17, 18; Lev. 18; 20). The basis for our behavior rests in the nature of God. We are to be holy because God is holy (Lev. 20:7).

Other texts used by some theologians to either advocate homosexuality or to eliminate the above texts include:

(1) 1 Samuel 20:30 — Jonathan choosing David over himself is not a homosexual act. Jonathan chose David over himself and his brothers to succeed his father Saul as king. This brought shame, said Saul, to his mother.

(2) 2 Samuel 1:26 — David states, "I am distressed for you my brother Jonathan; very pleasant have you been to me; your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." These are all general words that apply to many sorts of friendships and relationships. To read homosexuality into them is to do gross injustice to the text.

(See 1 Sam. 18:1; Gen. 38:28; 44:30; Prov. 22:15).

Some argue that Ruth and Naomi shared a lesbian relationship citing Ruth 1:14: Ruth "clung to" her mother-in-law, Naomi. In the context these words have no sexual meaning. People cling to the Lord but no one would suggest that they have a sexual relationship with him. (See Deut. 11:22; 30:20; Josh. 22:5).

There is no text that supports the idea that God favors homosexuality in the Old Testament. On the other hand, there are numerous texts that demonstrate God's displeasure with such behavior.

The next article will examine the New Testament witness pertaining to homosexuality.

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*[Tim Sensing, Mebane Street Church of Christ, PO Box 1861, Burlington, NC 27216-1861. *The content of this series of articles will appear in substance in the April issue of* **Gospel Advocate** *and appears here by permission.]*

Christ and Culture Collide Again

By Hubert F. Denison

JANUARY 1993 WILL GO down as a time of intense collision between Christ and our culture over the abortion issue. January 22, 1993 marked the twentieth anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in the case of Roe v. Wade. Prior to that 1973 decision, abortion was—except in the most extreme circumstances—forbidden throughout the United States. Today, however, abortions in the USA are performed at the rate of 1.5 million per year. That's more than 4,100 every day.

January is also when our new President issued the administrative order that lifted the "gag rule." Federally-funded clinics may once again openly include the abortion option in their counseling of pregnant women. Only time will tell just how much this action will increase the number of abortions.

Across our country, these events were met with public assemblies and public statements of both praise and protest. America is deeply divided over this issue. Of greatest concern, however, is the way that the unborn children almost disappear in all of the political arguments. God all the way back to Roe v. Wade. This decision was a ruling concerning "a woman's right to privacy." It failed to mention that another life was at stake! The "pro-choice" advocates *still* fail to mention it, or consider it.

Let's set the record straight. Consider the unborn. We *are* talking about a *life*. Attempts to hide this fact by using desensitizing terms such as "fetus," "embryo," or "fertilized egg" won't wash, not if we're honest about what we know medically.

From the moment of conception, all of the genetic material of a unique human being is in place. The rest of the nine-month pregnancy is just a matter of this unique person becoming what he or she already is.

At the end of only six weeks, all the internal organs are present in rudimentary formation. At eight weeks, there is a readable electrical impulse from the brain. By the end of the ninth or tenth week, there are muscular reflexes such as swallowing, squinting, and movement of the tongue. A heartbeat can be monitored by the end of the twelfth week.

Is this unborn baby nothing more than a piece of tissue to be removed at will? Is this baby some sort of parasitic growth, just one of several "inconveniences" that can arise from sexual activity?

Don't be put off by the term, "inconvenience." It is an accurate expression of the attitude toward the unborn child that results in the vast majority of abortions.

Let's set the record straight again. The "hard cases" (cases where the abortion option is considered because of rape, incest, danger to the mother's life or severe fetal deformity) actually account for only 2 to 7% of all the abortions in America. One study, done by Alan Guttmacher Institute, revealed these statistics about the reasons for abortions being done: Mother's health—3%; Possible health problems of the baby—3%; Pregnancy resulting from rape or incest—1%. That's only 7% of all the abortions in the study. The other 93% were openly done for birth control! Notice the reasons given for 93% of the abortions in the study: A child will change my lifestyle—16%; I'm not ready for the responsibility—21%; I can't afford a baby—21%; I have a relationship problem—12%; I lack maturity—11%; I have all the children I want—8%; Various other reasons—4%.

The record is clear. The vast majority of abortions result from a selfishness that does, indeed, see the unborn child as nothing more than an inconvenience.

Let's get personal. Were you born before January 22, 1973? If not, were your parents born before that date? Yes? Then, what if Roe v. Wade had happened in 1943 instead of 1973? How many of *us*, or our parents, were born into families that were "too large" or "too poor" or to parents who were "too young" or "too immature" by someone's standards? How many of us, or our parents, were "inconveniences"? If Roe v. Wade had happened in 1943 instead of 1973, how many of would have never been born? Sobering, isn't it?

While we might empathize in some way with those who find themselves in one of the "hard cases," let's not be fooled into thinking that the "hard cases" are really what the abortion issue in this country is about. The abortion issue in America is really about a selfish, sexually promiscuous culture that has little value for anything that inconveniences it, even human life.

How does God view the unborn? Consider these passages: "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." "O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me!... Thou dost beset me behind and before, and layest thy hand upon me...for darkness is as light with thee. For thou didst form my inward parts, thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise thee, for thou are fearful and wonderful. Wonderful are thy works!" (Jer. 1:5; Ps. 139:1,5,12b-14).

Passages such as Psalm 10:14 and Psalm 68:5 tell us that God's protective love is especially extended to the weak and helpless. Who in creation is weaker and more helpless than the unborn children in a culture such as ours?

Here is what we must conclude. Human life from its earliest stages is known and loved by God. This life, the unborn child, is God's creation in His own image. God knows and loves the unborn. So must we!

Do what you can to change people's hearts, not just their minds, on this issue. The heart must surrender to God's loving will, understanding that God's will always results in the good of mankind. His will says that sex is to be confined to the relationship between a husband and wife who can bring a child into the world through a nurturing family unit. God's rule also says that the selfishness so characteristic of our culture must be replaced with selfless, *agape* love. When the hearts of American citizens change in this direction, the scourge of abortion will disappear from our land.

[1436 81st Ave. N., St. Petersburg, FL 33702]

Behave Yourself

By Rita Watson

EVERY PARENT HAS, I suppose, at least one statement that they make over and over. My father-in-law still tells his three grown sons to "Behave yourselves. You might see someone who knows me." A statement he probably inherited from his father.

Twenty some years ago I thought it was funny, but now that I'm a parent of teenagers I appreciate the wisdom of that statement. I now know how much my child's behavior reflects on me as a parent and as a person.

I have also discovered the spiritual truth behind Grandad's statement.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

The scriptures not only tell us how to conduct our lives, they also tell us why.

We are to abide in Christ so that we may bear fruit that will **glorify the Father** (John 15:1-8).

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We are to bear with the scruples of the weak, edify our neighbor and receive one another as Christ would so that with one mind and mouth we can **glorify God the Father** (Rom. 15:1-7).

We are to be generous in our giving not only to supply the needs of the saints but so others can **glorify God** (2 Cor. 9:6-15).

We are to speak sound doctrine so that older women will lead lives that train younger women to behave in a way that will not bring reproach on the word of God. Likewise, older men, younger men, and servants are to conduct themselves in a way that **adorns the doctrine of God** (Titus 2:1-10).

We are to live as pilgrims on earth, conducting ourselves honorable among the worldly so that even if they speak evil of us now they will, in the end, **glorify God** (1 Pet. 2:11ff).

Our goal is right lives. Our reason is to glorify God.

Just as my child's conduct reflects on me, so mine reflects on my heavenly Father. How the world perceives God may depend on what they see in me. And what they see in me could decide whether they ever really want to get to know Him as their Father.

Now, when I hear my husband telling our girls to behave themselves, I not only hear the echo of my father-in-law's voice, but I also "hear" my heavenly Father say, "Behave yourself, Rita. You might see someone who needs to know Me."

[903 Oak St., Marion, NC 28752. The Watsons worship with the church in Marion, NC. They are the parents of two teenage girls and one pre-school boy. Rita has literally taught Bible classes for all ages from coast (Oregon) to coast (NC). She has spoken for ladies classes and retreats and especially has enjoyed doing slide presentations based on the Scriptures for ladies days, retreats, and a university lectureship.

Except for a few articles in church newsletters and similar publications, her published "works" have been limited to letters to the editors of local newspapers and national magazines (i.e. Smithsonian).]

The Song of the Soul

By Jerry Senn

SINGING IS THE LANGUAGE of the soul! We seek to express what is going on inside our hearts. When Adam saw Eve for the first time, he said: "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." Literally, Adam was saying, "This one" (Eve), is different from all the animals. She is like me, taken from my own body. Can you imagine having that experience? His words reflect a music within, and if we had heard the words, they may well have sounded musical.

Singing is a gift from God. We talk about people being gifted singers. Some indeed are! But all humans have the wonderful capacity to feel things on the inside. We continue to study our inner make up, but seem to learn so little. Misuse of emotions, playing on them to manipulate others, calling for unrestrained expression are all perversions of what God intended. But, God does want us to be **in touch** with our emotions.

When "Moses and the sons of Israel sang," it was to express the feeling of deliverance from the wicked hand of Pharaoh (Exodus 15). It wasn't mere speech, they "sang" the message in some sort of melodious voice, a modulation of the sounds. Singing, rather than merely speaking, reflected **inner feelings** which longed for expression. It is a special language which allows our feelings to be communicated to others, but also gives the emotions an appropriate outlet. It is God-given. Have we learned to employ it to God's glory?

Our singing efforts are often taken up with mastering the mechanics, making sure the musical sounds are harmonious and pleasing to the ear, as well as, biblical. Worthy efforts, to be sure, but they miss what singing is. They are merely attempts to refine the external.

There must be a song in the soul before it reaches the tongue. "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you...singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Col. 3:16). Singing **is the language of the soul**!!!

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I Want Life

By Gary G. Payne

THERE WAS A MAN standing near. He could not help but bend his ear to hear all he could. He was intrigued by everything he was seeing and hearing.

This man was rich. He was young. He was successful. If I were to compare him with someone today, I would compare him to a young senator or a young mayor of a major city. And, as Jesus was getting ready to leave, he ran up to Jesus and fell on his knees. Can you picture it? A rich, young, important politician running and falling before a peasant carpenter turned prophet from the insignificant town of Nazareth.

But something in Jesus got a hold of this young man and would not let go. Read Mark 10:17-31. The man asked: "What must I do to inherit life?" Do you think his question was genuine? Did he really want to know?

Yes. This man had it all—as far as money goes. Nice house. Nice car (or should I say, camel?). Great position. A job some would sell their mother for. He had everything going for him. But something inside him felt empty. Unfulfilled.

The problem with money is that you never have enough. And, his religion didn't seem to help much either. Yet, he was the kind of guy most people would want as a member of their church. A good contributor and a good guy. He was honest. He didn't break the law—even God's law.

But his being an outstanding and religious person did not fulfill. He thought to himself: "There has to be more. I want the kind of relationship with God that I see in Jesus." Jesus knew the genuineness in this man. I believe that is why Mark says, "Jesus looked at him and loved him" (Mark 10:21a). The man wanted life.

But.... We humans are complex. We often have mixed emotions. We often have mixed motives. While one part of him was genuine, wanting to follow Jesus, the other part of him was not willing to make the sacrifice. It was more than he had expected. The other part of him said, "No."

It's hard to give up everything. What if Jesus told you, "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor"? Would you do it? Quite frankly, I do not know if I would. I do not know that Jesus wants me to either. But if he told me to, that would be a hard pill to swallow. (You see, being rich is relative. All of us are rich compared to most people in the world.)

There is a lot more at stake than wanting to live comfortably. In our society having money and being successful is looked upon very favorably. Having money means you are responsible and smart.

In Jesus' day it even carried more weight. It meant God was rewarding you. You were in good standing with God; that is why you've got it so good. So, for the disciples and for the rich young man, it was difficult to accept what Jesus said. "You mean he has to sell everything? We already thought he was o.k. That's why he has it so good in the first place." So, the man went away. He didn't find the life he was looking for.

Unless.... Maybe he did find the life. Jesus said it was hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom. He didn't say it was impossible.

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:25). By the way, there is no indication that there was a gate called the Needle's Eye; there was some time later, but not when Jesus said this. Jesus is referring to a needle like a sewing needle. Now that does sound hopeless, doesn't it? A camel would never fit through the hole of a sewing needle.

But this is what gives me hope: "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God" (Mark 10:27). If we are going to make it at all, it's going to be because of God.

As far as fulfillment goes, we are not going to find it because of social status, money, or anything else. Not even religion. We will come out empty. If you want life, you'll find it in a relationship. A relationship with the Lord of life.

The rich young man was religious, he kept God's law, and he even had the approval from his peers that he was what God wanted him to be. But he wasn't fulfilled. He knew something was lacking. And, he hoped Jesus could help him. Maybe he did find life. Maybe he left and thought about it. Maybe he thought to himself, "You know, there is no way I can be good enough or have enough. If I'm going to have life, it's going to be because God makes it happen. Then there will be fulfillment. For now and forever."

If Jesus said to you, "One thing you lack...," what would it be? What is it that you are holding back? Do you want life? For now and forever? Then give Jesus your heart. That's what he is looking for.

[1583 Freeway Drive, Reidsville, NC 27320.]

How to Read a New Testament Letter

By Stanley N. Helton

GENRE STUDY IS NOT NEW—we have always done it, but not always self-consciously. For example, we know that a parable doesn't usually relate a historical event, though it could. Narrative, on the other hand, retells actual historical events. A letter, however, takes place in a historical context and is a response to particular historical situations. Distinguishing between biblical genres, therefore, is elementary to interpreting the Bible. In this article I deal with how genre helps us to read a New Testament letter.

At the turn of the century, several papyrus documents were found in Egypt; to the surprise of biblical scholars, some letters among the fragments had the same form as the letters of the New Testament. Because of these fortuitous discoveries, we now know the basic structure of the ancient letter, which generally followed this form:

1. A to B
2. Greeting
3. Thanksgiving or Prayer
4. Body
5. Final Greetings and Farewell

Note these elements in the following letter written about A.D. 25 (the prayer wish ends the body).

Theon
to the most honored Tyrranus,
very many greetings.

Heraclides, the bearer of this letter, is my brother, wherefore I entreat you with all my power to take him under your protection. I have also asked your brother Hermias by letter to inform you about him. You will do me the greatest favor if you let him win your approval. Before all else I pray that you may have health and the best success, unharmed by the evil eye.

Farewell.

(This example is from C. K. Barrett, ed. **The New Testament Background: Selected Documents** [New York: Harper and Row, 1961], 28–29. Please, write me if you would like a bibliography, since I do not have space to cite all the studies that support this article.)

If you will open your Bible to Paul's letter to Philemon, you can see that it also follows the form of an ancient Hellenistic letter.

1. A to B (vv. 1,2). Our letter begins with identification of the author (and Timothy, though throughout the rest of the letter Paul refers to himself in the first person) and then the recipients: Philemon, Apphia, Archippus, and the church in their house. (The letter is really to Philemon; Paul mentions the others as a courtesy. We know this because the body [see below] addresses the reader with the singular "you," which is clear in Greek, but not English).

2. Greeting (v. 3). The greeting is somewhat equivalent to our "How are you?" When we say this, we are acknowledging another person's presence, not trying to get information of the person's well-being. This is not to imply that Paul is not sincere—he most earnestly is—only that this was a standard way to say, "Hello." In Christian correspondence, "grace" reflects the customary Greek greeting, **charein**, while "peace," reflects the common Jewish greeting, **shalom**. This, though worthy of reflection, is not the main point of the letter.

3. Thanksgiving or Prayer Wish (vv. 4-6).

Again, it was customary in the ancient Hellenistic letter for a writer to thank the god(s) for the well-being of the recipient. The Christians, and the Jews before them, took over the form and directed it toward the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Occasionally, New Testament writers will insert a doxology here instead of the customary prayer. Though this section is ripe for theological reflection—and may well lather into a sermon—it is still not the point of the letter.

4. Body (vv. 4–21). Where the body begins in some NT letters is hard to decide. I normally skip to the end of the letter since the final matters are easier to pick out (see below #5). Once you have done this, you at least have the end of the body. To find the beginning of the body, you watch for the transition from the Thanksgiving or Prayer to new material, which, by default, is the beginning of the body. This, of course, becomes easier with practice.

All the New Testament letters are a particular type of letter: they are petitions: the writers expect their readers to do something. Read the body of Philemon two or three times. What is Paul trying to get Philemon to do? Now, how do you know you're right? Well, you don't have to guess. Paul, as he often does, uses a standard formula, called a **petition**, to clue the reader(s) into his purpose: "I appeal, (urge, encourage, or exhort) you to...." Whatever completes the thought of the petition is the point of the section, and sometimes the point of the whole letter (e.g., 1 Corinthians 1:10 and 1 Peter 2:11,12). In the letter to Philemon Paul begins his appeal in verse 9, repeats in verse 10, but you don't get to what he wants Philemon to do until verse 17: "welcome him as you would welcome me." That's it. Paul wants Philemon to take back Onesimus, as if the slave were the apostle himself. Everything else in the letter seeks to do this one task, and is therefore, secondary to the main purpose of the letter.

Paul interrupts his appeal with an eulogy on Onesimus's character (vv. 10–16), by which Paul seeks to change Philemon's opinion of his run-away slave. After his appeal is fully before Philemon (v. 17), Paul changes his strategy in verses 18–21 and offers to pay for the damages incurred by Onesimus's absence. He also reminds Philemon of his debt to Paul (a blow below the belt!).

When Paul requests that a room be prepared for him (v. 22), he is not merely asking for a place to stay; he is pressuring Philemon into carrying out his requests regarding Onesimus. "Visit talk" stresses the seriousness with which the writer expected his letter to be taken: Paul, if released, can see for himself how well Philemon has complied with his request. (A glance back at the thanksgiving [vv. 4–6] reveals that Paul began to set Philemon up before the body).

5. Final Greetings and Farewell (vv. 23–25). Similar to the end of a phone conversation when we let the kids say "Hi" to grandma, Paul sends greetings from those who are with him. If we knew more about these people, we might see that Paul mentions them to encourage Philemon compliance to his request (see Col. 4:10,14).

Verse 25 is a standard farewell in Christian letters. Here Paul returns to the plural ("your"), as he had begun in verses 1–3, suggesting that he intends the letter to be read publicly. Think of what that means for Philemon if he is in the audience listening to this letter directed toward him.

Twenty or twenty-one of the documents in the New Testament are letters and the forms mentioned above recur frequently; therefore, Bible teachers must know how these forms affect our reading of these letters, Genre study helps us to distinguish between the primary and the secondary, between the point and supportive materials.

What are the implications of this approach? First, the main point of the letter controls or subordinates everything else in the letter. This provides some controls to interpretation. For example, based on our analysis above, it would be invalid to make Paul's "visit talk" an example of Christian hospitality. Furthermore, it would be stretching the function of verse 3 to seek some deep meaning in the words "grace" and "peace." The apostle is saying "Hi." Secondly, it leads to an informed reading of the text. Do this before you read a commentary and you will be in a position to have a discussion with

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the commentator, rather than accepting his or her conclusions merely because they are in print. Thirdly, it is true to our conviction that people can read and understand the Bible for themselves.

[Stan is the out-reach minister for the church in Chapel Hill, NC. Contact him at PO Box 4023, Chapel Hill, NC 27514.]

It Doth Not Suffice

By Neal Pollard

WEST OF THE KING'S Highway and south of the Dead Sea fifteen miles from Petra is where historians locate the place called Teman, northeast of Edom. Teman should not be altogether unfamiliar as its name appears in seven Old Testament books. The Temanites began very early to make their mark on ancient society by their affluent lifestyle and excessive material gain. They had all anyone could ever want from the world. Perhaps, in their day, Teman was the envy of her neighbors. Yet we have divine record which shows heaven's regard toward Esau's descendants. In an age of self-sufficiency, we may be well served to examine some facts about Teman.

First, they were **wise**, but wisdom alone is not enough (Jere. 49:7). "Is wisdom no more in Teman? Is counsel perished from the prudent? Is their wisdom vanished?" The **Dickson Study Bible** seems to indicate the Temanites were esteemed as sages of their day. Unfortunately, sin seems to have clouded their finer sense of judgment in matters spiritual. Is wisdom wrong? Of course not! Solomon indicates wisdom is more precious than rubies (Prov. 8:11). We immediately recognize this wisdom as that built upon and completely owing to the Bible. Julius Charles Hare said, "The intellect of the wise is like glass; it admits the light of heaven and reflects it." The problem starts when man parts with the genius of God's word and turns instead to the empty pursuits of man's foolishness. The Temanites were not too far removed from the promise of Abraham through their forefather Esau. Yet foolishly they rejected God's way for their own way (Isa. 59:1,2). God save us today from a substitute standard of wisdom! God never meant that man should scale the heavens by strides of human wisdom.

Second, they were **mighty**, but might alone is not enough (Obad. 9). My mother always told us, "Might never makes right!" Another mother, Hannah, said in her song of thankfulness, "For by strength shall no man prevail" (1 Sam. 2:9). Obadiah pronounced this curse on Teman: "And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed...." The Old Testament word used here for "might" (**gibbor**) is the same adjective most often used to describe God. When we begin to trust in our own strength, we naturally replace God on the throne of our hearts. In what ways are we mighty? Are we mighty in Scripture like Apollos (Acts 18:24)? Are we mighty in words and deeds as was Moses (Acts 7:22)? Are we mighty in our ways like Jotham (2 Chron. 27:6)? Or do we rely on our own strength as did the Temanites?

Notice now the context of Jeremiah 49. From this chapter we are told of the material riches Teman possessed. They were **wealthy**, but wealth alone is not enough. Remember the question Christ posed in Matthew 16:26? "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?" Let us suppose it were possible for an individual to own every bit and corner of this world. If that individual placed it all at the feet of Jesus as he gave an answer for his life, he would find that it would not serve as a substitute for godly living nor would it serve as a payment for even a single crime! When trust is placed upon material things instead of God, we make the poorest investment imaginable (Matt. 6:19). Jesus told his audience in Matthew 6 that if we will put God first, he will supply our needs. Someone wisely said, "Money is an article which may be used as a universal provider of everything but happiness, and as a universal passport to everywhere except heaven." Paul said, "The love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Tim. 6:10).

Finally, Amos 1:11,12 sheds additional light on the lives of the Temanites. Recording God's woes upon Edom, Amos alludes to Edom's fault of being able to help, but refraining from assisting brother Israel in their time of need. They were **able**, but ability alone is not enough. God says, "I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah." Teman knew what was right, but failed to act (Cf. Jas. 4:17). What a terrible price to pay for burying one's talents. Today we can know the truth and turn away from it in favor of something far less valuable (2 Tim. 4:4). What is worse, we may know the truth and seek to undermine and destroy the lives of godly individuals who teach it with their lives and words. Teman was successful, talented, and able, but they withered their potential through ungodliness. As God has given us all great ability, let us never use it to destroy the church. United in truth, we can pool our abilities to experience growth with divine approval.

We think it sad to see the lives of Christian people exchanging that precious commodity for sin and its influence. Teman examined her options, and she chose human wisdom, the might of man, fallible wealth, and the abilities of the flesh over trust and obedience to God. It all boils down to where we place our hope. Paul has the last words on what doth suffice: "But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death and will deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us..."!

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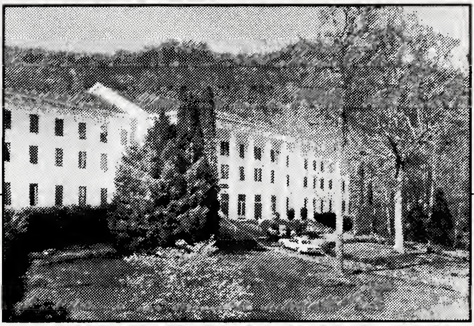

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

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"Think of it. A church in which each believer puts the needs of others before his own! A church in which believers are so busy taking care of others that no one has occasion to complain, 'Nobody cares about me.' A church in which it is more important for you to be right than me! A church full of likeminded people in attitudes and goals. A church at peace. All we need to do is to get some humility. But how do we go about getting it? Well, there's the rub. There is no quick fix. No twelve-step programs, no thirty-day courses. As a matter of fact, humility is not something you get. It is something you become."

—Dennis Conner, *"The Way to Unity,"* p. 17

EDITORIAL

By Johnny R. Melton

ONCE MORE in the history of **Carolina Christian** there is a changing of the guard. With this issue I assume editorial responsibility for the magazine on an interim basis. I am deeply indebted to my predecessors for their hard work which has resulted in **Carolina Christian** being read widely both within and without the region.

I wish to thank David Pharr for his five years of service as Editor. He and I have been friends for many years, and our friendship continues. I wish him well in his work as Director of East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions. The pages of **Carolina Christian** are open to him and I hope that he will favor the magazine with articles from time to time, as his schedule permits.

On occasions like this, historical reflection is appropriate. **Carolina Christian** began as **Carolina Christian Messenger of Truth** January 1, 1959. John R. Avants was the editor and publisher. In April 1959 Burl Curtis was named Editor.

Brother Curtis served capably as Editor until he left South Carolina to attend Harding University Graduate School of Religion. Howard Winters, who had been serving as Associate Editor, became Editor at the end of 1971. Brother Winters served as Editor until his death in May 1988. During most of that time he handled all of the editorial work and much of the writing for the magazine. David Pharr and I joined the Board of Directors in 1978. Dennis Conner was added to the Board shortly after that. David assisted Howard as Carolina News Editor, Dennis served as Brotherhood News Editor, and I served as Carolina Pulpit Editor.

When Howard's illness began to sap his strength I was named Managing Editor in January 1988. When David was named Editor in May 1988 I continued to serve as Managing Editor with expanded responsibilities.

When the Board of Directors asked me to serve as Editor I was happy to accept. However,

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN (ISSN 0008-672X)

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION STAFF

Johnny R. Melton, Editor
Jim Mullican, Associate Editor
Michael Mobley, News Editor
Tim Sensing, Book Review Editor

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All items to be printed in a given month's issue should reach the editor no later than the 20th day of the preceeding month. For example, an item to be included in the July issue must be received by June 20.

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I asked that the appointment be made on an interim basis. There were three reasons for my request. First, I want the Board of Directors to be able to evaluate how well I implement the editorial policy which has been adopted before a permanent appointment is made. Second, I want the magazine's readers to have an opportunity to evaluate my work. And third, I want the appointment to be on an interim basis so that I can evaluate whether or not this is a work I can do. (Not everyone who works well behind the scenes is capable of working well in the limelight.)

The Board has determined to make a permanent appointment in October.

Editorial Policy

In the Silver Anniversary Special Issue (June/July 1983), Howard Winters enumerated the following goals for **Carolina Christian**:

1. To communicate the truth.
2. To keep scattered Christians over the Carolinas bound together in aim, purpose, love, fellowship, unity, and appreciation one for another.
3. To share ideas.
4. To promote the cause of Christ in the Carolinas both in the two states and around the world.

These goals provided the framework around which the Board of Directors formulated the following editorial policy:

I. To communicate biblical truth to Christians and non-christians alike in the belief that Scripture is the inspired and inerrant word of God.

II. To promote a common aim, purpose, love and appreciation for one another in the unity of the Spirit.

A. Our purpose is to accentuate the positive (that is, to emphasize our areas of agreement), not the negative (that is, not to emphasize our differences).

B. It shall be the concern of this magazine and its editor to promote harmony and fellowship among Carolina churches.

C. This magazine and its editor will attempt to stand equally related to all churches striving to practice New Testament Christianity. While major doctrinal differences may exist in some places, it should be kept in mind that the vast majority of the churches of Christ seek to adhere to Scripture.

III. To share ideas and understanding of Scripture.

A. This is to be accomplished through articles, editorials, news reports, etc.

B. The policy of **Carolina Christian** is to promote an open and honest investigation of the Scriptures in the pursuit of truth.

C. When issues are discussed over which sincere brethren may disagree, articles should focus on the issues, not on the individuals with whom the writer differs.

D. In areas of disagreement both sides should be permitted to state their position without restraint and then the matter should be closed. Articles disagreeing with an earlier article should be accepted as long as it is limited to a presentation of scriptural arguments and/or reasonable logic, and is written in a spirit of charity. This is not to say the magazine should be open to the spread of false doctrine, but it is to say that it should accept diverse views on topics where sincere Christians disagree in order to provide fair exposure to varying viewpoints. The reader should be left to form his/her own conclusions. An opposing viewpoint may be so identified by the editor.

E. No more than two articles by a writer on each side of a controversial issue should be printed within one year (for example, one "pro" and one "con" on a subject, with perhaps one additional rebuttal on each side). Editorials and articles by the editor dealing with any and all brotherhood issues should be limited to no more than two within a year's time.

F. The sincerity of brethren and their loyalty to the authority of Scripture should be assumed, recognizing that Christian love believes the best ("Love...believes all things").

IV. To promote the cause of Christ in the Carolinas and around the world.

A. **Carolina Christian** will be an instrument for making known the progress and needs of churches in the Carolinas and elsewhere.

B. Attention should be given to the good works of churches and individuals as they seek only to glorify Christ and His Kingdom.

As I pursue the foregoing editorial policy, I will be particularly concerned with the tone of the articles submitted for publication. The following statement from the pen of T. B. Larimore expresses an editorial sentiment with which I sympathize: "*The Angel* (Larimore's paper was named *The Angel of Mercy, Love, Peace and Truth*) possesses not the slightest belligerent proclivity—not even in the latent or dormant state. It will avoid all unpleasant discussion and personal references. One harsh, unkind or unpleasant word will be sufficient reason for consigning to the flames any articles written for its pages." (As quoted by Douglas A. Foster in *"Holding Back the Tide: T. B. Larimore and the Disciples of Christ and Churches of Christ Division,"* **Discipliana,** Vol. 53, No. 1, 1993, p. 4.)

My perception of the role for **Carolina Christian** is to be a voice for the Lord's work in the Carolinas. I want to promote what the Lord is doing in our churches. I also want to provide quality articles that stimulate study and reflection.

Carolina Christian is not in competition with **Gospel Advocate, Firm Foundation, Image, Wineskins, Spiritual Sword, 21st Century Christian, Restoration Quarterly, Bulletin Digest,** or **Truth for Today**. Each of these brotherhood publications has a legitimate role to play in the life of the church. **Carolina Christian** will take its rightful place among these periodicals and seek to fulfill its role in an exemplary fashion.

Like Larimore's paper mentioned above, **Carolina Christian** will leave to other journals "assorted controversies involving exciting feuds between colorful leaders," and instead will carry "articles on topics like heaven, obedience, and evil communications, most of a strong devotional nature" (Foster). Such a stance did not serve Larimore very well. His papers folded due to "a perceived lack of relevance" (Foster). However, I am convinced that the majority of our readers will appreciate sucha stance and will perceive it to be not only relevant, but commendable as well.

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Editorial Staff

I have asked Jim Mullican to serve as Associate Editor. Brother Mullican serves the Central Haywood church in Clyde, NC as both an elder and preacher. He is also on the Board of Directors of Carolina Christian Publications, Inc. He will contribute articles regularly and will also assist me in planning the various issues of the magazine.

Tim Sensing has accepted my request to serve as Book Review Editor. Brother Sensing preaches for the Mebane Street church in Burlington, NC. He is a relative newcomer to the Carolinas, but he has already contributed several articles to the magazine, and he has demonstrated an interest in Christian journalism.

Dennis Conner was appointed Brotherhood News Editor when brother Pharr became editor five years ago. He has done a good job, but has asked to be relieved of this responsibility. I have no closer friend and no more trusted confidant than Dennis Conner. I appreciate his leadership on the Board of Directors and I have asked him to serve as an ad hoc member of the editorial staff.

Michael Mobley, who has written most of our book reviews for the past several years, will now serve as Brotherhood News Editor. Brother Mobley preaches for the church in Mooresville, NC. He also serves as Director of Providence Christian School in Charlotte. He needs to be added to Carolina church mailing lists so that he can glean from bulletins items to be included in the News column. Send announcements of upcoming events directly to him to ensure their inclusion in the News. Brother Mobley's address is: PO Box 312, Mooresville, NC 28115.

"It is not enough to own a Bible; we must read it. It is not enough to read it; we must let it speak to us. It is not enough to let it speak to us; we must believe it. It is not enough to believe it; we must live it."
(William A. Ward)

Winnie Keller

In this issue is a tribute to Winnie Keller by Tim Mastenbrook. The tribute is the message Tim delivered at sister Keller's funeral. I knew Winnie and had the opportunity to hear Tim deliver this tribute.

In our day there is a good bit of discussion regarding the role of women in the church. As I listened to Tim speak of Winnie's labors in the Lord, I was glad that Winnie didn't have a problem with her role in the church. Like Abel, even though she is dead, she still speaks (Heb. 11:4), if anyone cares to listen. "Then I heard a voice from heaven say, 'Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them"' (Rev. 14:13).

I appreciate the fact that Tim expressed confidence that Winnie, as a faithful child of God, is now with the Lord. There are those who do not think it is appropriate to express such confidence. I am reminded of a talk George DeHoff made on one occasion in Statesville, NC. He expressed dismay over the practice of some to say at a funeral that we don't know the eternal destiny of the deceased, that is in the hands of God. Brother DeHoff declared that a preacher who did not know the eternal destiny of a faithful Christian who has departed this life should sit down and let him preach the funeral because "I know where faithful Christians go when they die! And I'm not afraid to tell it. They go to be with the Lord." Amen.

Thank You

I am grateful for the expressions of support that have come to me since it was announced that I would assume the editorial responsibilities for **Carolina Christian**. I appreciate the confidence the Board has placed in me. I ask for prayers as I assume this work. I plead for patience and forbearance. I pledge my loyalty to "God and the word of his grace" (Acts 20:32).

Associate Editorial

The Preacher As a Care-Giver

By Jim Mullican

IN 1 TIMOTHY 4:12, PAUL SAYS, "Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, on faith, in purity." In the modern church, there is a tendency for the disciples to follow the example of the preacher, since he is the one most frequently before their eyes, and it is his teaching and preaching they hear. Therefore, if the church is to be a warm and caring church, the preacher must be warm and caring.

To successfully deal with the challenges to faith in the modern world, a preacher needs a good education, whether obtained in formal schools or through self-guided study, but two other characteristics are more important. In Mark 12:29-31, Jesus responded to a question concerning which commandment was the most important by pointing out the two greatest. He said, "The first is...you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." A preacher must be wholeheartedly dedicated to God. Too large a number leave the pulpits for "better-paying jobs," or because they are preaching to try to counter-balance a moral weakness. Genuine love for God and right must come first in a preacher's life, or he will hurt the church more than he will help it.

Jesus also said the second commandment is, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Someone has observed, "People won't care how much you know until they know how much you care." There are times when preachers must be negative—must reprove and rebuke—but it will be better received when motivated by genuine love rather than pride or anger. A man who loves his hearers will accomplish more with mediocre speaking ability than the most brilliant scholar and orator who is cold and uncaring.

In any congregation, there are several groups who need the preacher's special care. Among these are widows, who are often the most faithful and dedicated Christians. They can be a tremendous help in the local church, if the preacher shows loving care and helps involve them in various ways. They can teach classes, teach correspondence courses, help with office work, telephone absentees, visit, prepare food in cases of sickness or death, and serve in numerous ways. Let them know they still have an important role in the kingdom of God. Others who need the preacher's special care are the divorced, teenagers, children in dysfunctional families, those married to non-Christians, the new converts, the sick, the bereaved, and the poor. Space does not permit a detailed discussion of the ways to show care and concern for each group, but one who genuinely cares will be able to find ways. They can range from jogging with the teenaged boys to changing the oil in a widow's car to doing plumbing repairs for the poor. It may be necessary to remove one's coat and tie and get dirty in order to be a real minister—a servant—but that's what Jesus taught in John 13 when he laid aside his garments and washed the disciples's feet.

The preacher who seeks to be a source of care and love must also seek to avoid four dangers.

The first danger is women. Numerous well-known preachers have been discredited because of indiscretions with women. Several factors are involved, including the fact that two-thirds of the church is women. Women seek counseling more often than men. They may see in the preacher the qualities they desire but cannot find in their husbands. An explosive situation may result unless one is careful to avoid it. Some safety measures include using the telephone for counseling and visiting with women. Seek to avoid visiting women alone. Show love and care by means other than physical expressions.

Second, avoid being in a clique. Members of the church will resent any appearance of favoritism, whether real or imagined.

Third, do not seek to "run their lives." Give help and guidance when it is requested, but be careful about assuming the right to intrude into the personal business of the members.

Fourth, the preacher must not neglect his own family. They need his care and time, too. If they are lost because he spent all his time caring for the needs of others, he will find all his victories hollow indeed.

[Jim Mullican serves the Central Haywood church as both preacher and elder. Contact him at RR 4 Box 30-A, Clyde, NC 28721.]

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Winnie Keller (1907-1993)

By Tim Mastenbrook

WE ARE HERE this afternoon in memory of Winnie Keller. We are her family, her co-workers in Christ, and her friends.

Winnie lived a full 86 years. She was born Winnie Burnham in New Blaine, Arkansas on January 8, 1907.

She was a caring mother and a loving friend to all who had the privilege to know her.

Winnie was a lifelong member of the church of Christ. She dedicated herself to service for her Lord and the Christian faith she so deeply loved.

She is survived by her family and loved ones: son, Jerry Keller; granddaughter, Tara Smith, and grandson, Shane Keller; Brenda Vought; beloved friends, Richard and Polly Green, and Melba McClellan; and hundreds of others who loved her, and were loved by her.

She was such a very special person in so very many ways. It is my honor, and our honor, to be here today to respectfully memorialize Winnie Keller.

Will you pray with me, please?

Loving Father in Heaven. Hallowed be Thy name. We come to You today seeking comfort at the earthly loss of one so dear to us. Please soothe our spirits and console us. We come to You with sweet, warm, loving memories of Winnie. So many memories after such a long and full life. Thank You for memories. We come to You with great thanksgiving for Your saving grace. We can be assured Winnie is in Your arms. How can we thank You enough for that? Lastly, we come to You in the light of Winnie's life, and we are humbled. Bless us to live such a faithful and dedicated life of service as was hers. Father, thank You for being with Winnie all her life, for always being there for her, and for taking her to Yourself now. May it be so with each of us. We pray in the name of the Christ, Jesus, Amen.

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' '"Yes, Lord,' she told him, 'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.'"

(Jesus said,) "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 11:25-27; 14:1-3).

These are the words of Jesus Himself and they are so important to us. For they promise the faithful Christian: Heaven. My family and I have known Winnie Keller for almost 20 years. When we moved here 19 years ago, we had left home, jobs, family, church, and friends. That's when Winnie came into our lives. Winnie was a rock. In her presence, you felt more confident about life and about faith—you felt answers were close— that new anchors were nearby.

We miss Winnie. We hurt. We grieve for her. How comforting it is, though, to know Winnie no longer has to grasp at the dimensions of God's love, as the Bible says, but now she knows how wide and how long and how high and how deep the love of Christ is. As promised, she is filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Listen to the Psalmist:

"O Lord my God, I called to you for help and you healed me. O Lord, you brought me up from the grave; you spared me from going down into the pit. Sing to the Lord, you saints of his; praise his holy name. For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning. You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing to you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever" (Psalm 30:2-5,11-12).

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"From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe. I long to dwell in your tent forever and take refuge in the shelter of your wings" (Psalm 61:2-4).

"O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you. On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night. Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings" (Psalm 63:1-7).

Winnie Burnham Keller, was born to a farming family 86 years ago. Her Mom died when Winnie was just 12 years old. From that time on, she took care of the family and raised the children, including a cousin.

She was baptized in a creek near Blaine, Arkansas in 1920, and was added to the Lord's church.

She went to college for two years and received a teaching certificate. She became a school teacher and then a homemaker.

Winnie made a living during World War II by selling Bibles in Ft. Smith, Arkansas. At one time, she rented out her house while she and her son Jerry lived in the wash-house. At another time, she sold weather-stripping insulation with two elders in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

During all those years she was very active in the church. Always on the go. Her service included singing in a Gospel quartet. Most of the songs we have heard today were among those she loved.

From Tulsa, she moved back to Ft. Smith, to be with family and friends. On January 18, 1972 she moved to Charlotte to be nearer to Jerry and the family. She chose the location of her apartment in order to be near the church building.

In Charlotte, Winnie continued her dedicated life of devotion and service to the Lord and to the Christian faith she so deeply loved.

For many years, every Saturday, she and

friends—especially Mary Johnson—would visit a local nursing home. Others she enjoyed working with included Melba McClellan and Margie Cheshire.

She was active in one-on-one Gospel studies. One of those who came to Christ after studying with Winnie was Yvonne Smith Bannister. This morning I received a FAX from Yvonne and I would like to read it to you:

"Winnie, we were brought together through the work of the Lord. With your Bible knowledge and love for my lost soul, you and Mary Johnson came weekly to my home to teach me about Jesus and how to become a Christian. You gave the greatest gift anyone can give in this life. I remember after I came up from the waters of baptism you whispered in my ear that I was a new person, as clean as fresh fallen snow. What a joyous day that was! We became like mother and daughter. You helped me with questions about my faith and how to grow as a Christian. We spent hours together discussing the Bible and praying together, both in your home and in mine. Winnie, I remember you still just like the day we met. I'll carry that image in my heart of you until we meet again on the other side of Eternity. I'll know you by your smile. With the other saints, you'll greet and welcome me. What a Homecoming we will have! 'God never loved me in so sweet a way, 'til He brought thee to me and said, 'Behold a friend.'"

Winnie was one of the founders of our congregation's involvement in the World Bible School correspondence course program. She was very active in its leadership, and had hundreds of students worldwide. She was instrumental in my family's involvement in World Bible School. Today, because of her pioneering efforts, Providence Road church has had thousands of students, and untold numbers have obeyed the Gospel around the world.

Winnie was known for her high principles and character, her amazing knowledge of the Bible, and her very practical application of that knowledge. One of her favorite preachers was Tommy Alexander, a former preacher for Providence Road.

Let me close with my last three memories of Winnie. I went to see her a few days before she died. She told me how much she had enjoyed it when Richard and Polly took her for a car ride a few days before. Winnie loved God's earthly creation. But the beauties of this world are only the smallest glimpse of the wonder of Heaven. Don't you know Winnie is enjoying seeing it with her friend and Lord, Jesus?

The second memory is of her recognizing me when I walked into the room. "Hi, Tim!" she said, "How's your wife, Melinda?" Winnie had such a wonderful mind. She had a special gift of a combination of common sense and Biblical wisdom. Sometimes when we face trials in this life, we get confused about which side of Heaven we're on. Not Winnie. She knew this side would have its struggles, and she knew she was bound for the side where she now stands—with perfect health, perfect joy, and perfect peace.

The third thing I remember was when I offered to read the Bible to her. I had prepared some Psalms to read. She said, rather firmly, "Read Acts 2:38." I said, "Winnie, I'm sure you know that one. Let me read these Psalms." "You're right," she said, "I know it by heart. Read Acts 2:38!" So I read it to her, as I read it to you now with it's surrounding verses, as I believe she would again insist that I do.

"When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do [to be saved]?'

"Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.' With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation'" (Acts 2:37-40).

[Formerly an elder, Tim is now the Associate Minister for the Providence Road church. This was his first funeral message. Contact him at 4900 Providence Rd., Charlotte, NC 28226.]

"God is not greater if you reverence Him, but you are greater if you serve Him"

(Augustine)

Homosexuality: Modern Society and the Ancient Text (Part Three)*

By Tim Sensing

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, Romans 1:24-27 is the clearest text condemning homosexuality. There are three arguments used to explain this text as irrelevant. J. Boswell focuses on new ways of understanding the meaning of "nature" (physis) in verses 26-27. For some it is limited to "what is natural to me." It is argued that Paul does not refer to those whose own nature or primary orientation is homosexual. Therefore, Paul condemns heterosexuals acting as homosexuals (perversion) in a context of idolatry and lust; he does not condemn true homosexuals (inversion).

D. S. Bailey believes that the foregoing distinction made between inversion and perversion regarding "nature" is legitimate for modern times but that Paul was unaware of it in his day. He concludes that the Bible "knows nothing of inversion as an inherited trait, or inherent condition due to psychological or glandular causes, and consequently regards all homosexual practice as evidence of perversion" (p.38). Therefore, Paul could hardly have made distinctions regarding perversion and inversion when these were unintelligible to him. Hence Paul is simply irrelevant or incomplete on the question of homosexuality.

Finally, R. Scroggs holds that "nature" has nothing to do with Jewish views of the creation or with theories of natural law. It is a concept ultimately derived from Greek, not Jewish, sources. The only model of homosexuality that Paul condemns is the current Greek one — namely, pederasty. He concludes that Romans 1 has little or no relevance to the modern model of mutual adult-adult homosexuality and one cannot know whether Paul would oppose "the caring adult relationship of mutuality" (p. 127).

James DeYoung counters the above arguments in a most conclusive way. By doing both a word study of "nature" and a contextual historical study of the use of the term in Paul's day, DeYoung clearly exposes the weaknesses of the above arguments. The word "nature" has these meanings: Origin, including birth and growth; the natural form or constitution of a person, animal or thing, including nature or character of a person; the regular order of nature; philosophically, nature as an originating power; nature personified, elementary substance (fire, water, air, earth); creature or mankind; kind, sort, species; sex (a woman, being a female and not a male by nature); approximately equal to the term "law" (p. 430).

DeYoung states: "In all these uses there is no suggestion that it has the meaning 'what is natural to me' or 'orientation.' The closest approximation is: the natural form or constitution of a person, animal or thing, including nature or character of a person. Yet this usage is never associated with homosexuality. It points to what results from origin or growth and includes the instinct of animals" (p. 430).

DeYoung goes on to demonstrate how the term is used elsewhere in the New Testament. No where does it have the meaning "what is natural to me."

DeYoung concludes: "This means that physis refers to what is the constitution of man, his being, as derived from the Creator.... Note how the Creator and creation immediately precede in the context (Rom. 1:19-23)" (p. 439).

Paul's concepts are not based upon Greek ideas but he shows a strong dependence upon Old Testament concepts.

Paul's words support a broader definition of homosexuality and does not limit it to pederasty. Paul writes literally, "males with males committing indecent acts"; he does not say "men with boys." He compares lesbianism with male perversion. As lesbianism was usually between adults in mutuality, so the force of the comparative argues for male adult-adult mutuality.

"Degrading passions" (v. 26) and "burned in their desire" argue that this is not Platonic nor morally neutral, whether referring to propensity, orientation or activity. The terms "toward one another," "men with men," "in themselves" and "their error" all argue for adult reciprocal mutuality and mutual culpability, which would not characterize pederasty. As the error is mutual, so is the recompense. The idea of "exchanged...abandoned the natural function" again suggests that adult sexual relations are intended.

To continue our study of the New Testament witness concerning homosexuality a few definitions are needed. For a comprehensive treatment of the Greek terms see P. Michael Ukleja, "Homosexuality in the New Testament," **Bibliotheca Sacra** 140 (July-Sept 1983): 259-266. He concludes his discussion on definitions stating,

While there is some ambiguity with regard to "malakos", it is not beyond reason to see the word representing the passive parties in homosexual intercourse. This is even more reasonable when it is in juxtaposition with "arsenokoites" which does imply an active homosexual role.... A strong possible translation for both "malakos" and "arsenokoites" is "the morally loose (effeminate) who allow themselves to be used homosexually" and "the person who is a practicing homosexual (351-52).

In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 both terms occur. Many argue that the words translated "homosexuals" (malakos) and "sodomites" (arsenokoites) do not refer to homosexuality but simply refer to those who are self-indulgent and to male prostitutes. The primary meaning of "malakoi" is "soft." Most lexicographers of the New Testament see this as a reference to passive homosexuals. The fact that "malakoi" are mentioned between two other sexual sins in this text lends weight to the argument that 'softness' here is not merely self-indulgence in general but males who allow themselves to be used homosexually (BAG 489-90). "Arsenokoites" means literally, "males who go to bed with males; Male homosexual, pederast, sodomite" (BAG 109). It is used in the LXX in Leviticus 18:22; 20:13.

Other passages include 1 Timothy 1:8-10 where again the word "arsenokoites" is used. Homosexuality is not, however, singled out as something worse than the other sins in this list. One final argument used by pro-homosexual advocates appeals the emotions. The foundation of the argument centers on the fact that Jesus was a man of love. How can a loving relationship be wrong? Although Jesus is a man of love, he told the woman taken in adultery to "go and sin no more" (John 8:3-11). He loved her but did not approve of sex outside of marriage. The appeal that homosexuals love each other and therefore are entitled to a loving sexual relationship ignores the distinction between love and sex. We have loving relations with parents, children, relatives, and friends, but this does not justify sexual relations with them. Love and sex are two different aspects of human relations.

Some appeal to the concept that all people need to engage in sexual behavior to be mentally or physically healthy. However, many normal, mature, healthy people are sexually celibate. Sexual activity has no correlation with mental or physical health.

Jesus recognized the teachings of Genesis 1 and 2 in Matthew 19. Second, Jesus accepted the binding authority of the law (Matt. 5:18-19). Jesus did not destroy or dismiss the old law. Instead he upheld it in his everyday life. Jesus

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fulfilled the law in his death and resurrection bringing to completion all the law intended.

As was discovered with the Old Testament, the New Testament speaks clearly as to God's displeasure with homosexual behavior. To answer the original question: Should we look at homosexuality differently today? The answer is no. The church historically has understood the scriptures correctly.

What then should our response be as the people of God? This question will be discussed in the concluding article.

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*[PO Box 1861, Burlington, NC 27216. *The content of this series of articles will appear in substance in the April 1993 issue of* **Gospel Advocate** *and appears here by permission.]*

Book Review

By Tim Sensing

THE CORE GOSPEL: On Restoring the Crux of the Matter, by Bill Love (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 1992). Learning to tell the story involves more than just knowing the facts. Bill Love tells the story of the Bible centering on the basic themes that will highlight the core gospel.

Every preacher should take the time to retell the biblical narratives in his own words. There can no longer be a disregard for form and function when preaching the biblical materials. It is time to understand why God chose narrative as His primary mode of communication. Story contains power. Bill Love has given here a useful model for telling the story. From his retelling of the story of God, Love has drawn useful preliminary conclusions concerning the nature of the core gospel. This understanding of the core gospel is developed at length in the final chapter of Part 1, where Love gives a brief summarization of the doctrine of atonement.

Through my own reading of the story contained in Scripture, I find a much broader outline to the gospel: the prophetic witness; the incarnation; the message of Jesus; the ministry of Jesus; the cross; the resurrection; the ascension; the enthronement; and his return. Each stage in the gospel story needs emphasis. Sometimes a sermon will point to one side of the coin without recognizing the other. With the limitations imposed upon the sermon setting, this is an acceptable given. Over the course of a ministry, the preacher needs to seek variety, balance and wholeness to his preaching. As I see the gospel story, there are several themes woven into the fabric of a plot that give rise to conflict and denouement. Love represents just one formalization of the core gospel's plot and crisis-denouement.

Paul, in Ephesians 1, has a broad eternal perspective of God's activity to redeem man. This does not limit other legitimate preaching concerns. Paul himself was not limited when he went on to discuss the purpose of the church, ministry gifts, or ethics in the remainder of Ephesians. Ephesians itself contains several contexts and themes suitable for preaching even though it might take one less time just to read aloud the letter itself. All of these themes and contexts are worthy of full exploration within the sermon without the development of themes and contexts in other sections of the letter. Paul does not develop the same themes in Ephesians as he does in Galatians. Although the gospel story lies behind both, due to a different intent, he develops different aspects of the core gospel. Isn't that expository preaching?

The next two sections of Love's book give a descriptive analysis of restoration preaching for the past four generations and of current preaching. Love clearly describes his methodology and assumptions that limit his conclusions. Although his conclusions support my own general presuppositions, his methodology does not warrant wholesale acceptance of these conclusions as fact (e.g., C. Leonard Allen, **The Cruciform Church**, Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 1990: 120-21).

A summarization of the first four generations of preaching by using published sermons has its limitations. Love quickly admits this limitation. He recognizes this as an obstacle that all descriptive historical analysis is subject to. He recognizes also (p. 109), that preaching is not the only way the core gospel is communicated from generation to generation. The limitation of using published sermons should water down enthusiasm for embracing Love's conclusions. The sermons selected for publication may or may not reflect what an individual may preach predominately in a local setting. Many of these men would preach often in various congregations using sermons over and over again. What would hinder them from preaching a sermon (or a family of related sermons) on the cross at every opportunity. This sermon might be preached hundreds of times yet only be published once in a book.

Love's conclusions must recognize that the percentages given may or may not reflect the same frequency in actual weekly sermons. Love's own analysis demonstrates that each of these men knew the atonement (not always to the same degree and sometimes to exclusion of some relevant N.T. metaphors). I tend to agree, however, with Love's observation that within many of these sermons these men neglected opportunities to root their convictions in the core of the gospel story. It appears to be negligent to overlook the gospel message as prevalently as is indicated. This is especially true of the second through fourth generations. But this conclusion has not been proven.

The descriptive comparison between the generations of published sermons is legitimate. I found great value in seeing the attitudes of my predecessors. To perceive Campbell's understanding of atonement and his assumption that most already know this doctrine (pp. 114-15, 128), is enlightening. It does give a possible reason why later generations seemingly received less and less teaching on the atonement and why later published sermons also tend to increasingly ignore the cross. If Love's assumption is true, that written sermons accurately reflect the steady diet of the congregation, then the conclusion of malnutrition is warranted.

Love has gone to great lengths to describe for the reader his chosen methodology in dividing the text into sections for statistical analysis. He recognizes these limitations from the outset. Yet he overlooks these self-imposed limitations when he draws his conclusions. It is as if he states, "in spite of my limitations, these results are now verified." Even though I agree with his conclusions, I must accept that, to date, these results have not been scientifically validated.

His division of the text neglects context entirely. On page 314, he makes a decision concerning criteria that flaws his findings. He neglects accepted historical and literary critical methodologies for analysis of documents. What he has assumed in pages 311-313, he now disregards. Form and function of texts are completely blurred by the arbitrary nature of the division. Could there not be contexts that constitute whole preaching units and yet be shorter than thirty minutes in reading time? If Love would have respected form and function, then we would have a clearer picture of the witness of Scripture as to what is legitimate preaching.

Matthew 13 gives an entire setting of a preaching encounter with the crowds as well as private teaching to the disciples. Yet this setting would be ignored completely by the methodology. Given shorter contexts by using the natural divisions in text themselves, are there not units that would also contain no mention (substantial or incidental) of the core gospel (e.g., pronouncement stories, parables, miracle stories, apocalyptic, etc.)? Love's 100% value is an arbitrary standard artificially erected for evaluation of restoration preaching.

His section on current trends of preaching I found useful. These examples helped me to see how others handle preaching the cross. I was moved, instructed, touched, and motivated by these excerpts. They proved to be excellent models exhibiting the preaching Love exhorts us all to strive for. He again holds them up as only a representative sample of current preaching that he recommends.

Love notes the purpose of section three (p. 259) is to be an encouragement. But what he is "convinced" of on p. 305 (that preachers today are moving back to preaching a more Christ-centered gospel), does not follow from his stated purpose. He did not set out to prove this, yet he assumes that his analysis did prove it. Love does not select his sample on the same criteria as he did the earlier generations. These samples were not chosen from sermon books but from actual preached sermons in the local setting. Are there not printed sermons available for analysis? This would maintain a consistent methodology throughout, apply consistent assumptions (p. 315), and give rise to more accurate conclusions. Earlier generations were subjected to a methodology that surveyed several sermons from each man, while the current preacher (although submitting twelve sermons), only had one sermon analyzed. What percentage of the core gospel did the twelve sermons exhibit? The sample selected from the earlier generations may receive some limited criticism, but I would venture to guess that the sample of current preachers would receive a mixed review including out-right rejection by some segments of our fellowship. Is there not a large segment of our brotherhood who is not represented here and may reflect more of the style of preaching of past generations? Could there not have been a sample chosen (randomly) that would have more fairly represented a cross section of our brotherhood? Love clearly notes that the purpose of this sampling is not to be the same as the previous section. However, again, Love crosses the river without a bridge and makes conclusions anyway.

I recommend this book strongly to the preacher who desires to see a model of narrative preaching. Bill Love exhibits a personal knowledge of the story of God. Bill Love's survey of preaching also makes a needed contribution to Restoration Historical Studies as well as a good survey of the History of Preaching. Finally, I applaud the exhortation to the high calling of preachers everywhere to focus on the crux of the matter: the atoning death of Jesus. All of us would serve congregations better by heeding this admonition. I know my own preaching needs to reemphasize all aspects of the atonement as discussed in Scripture. I know my own preaching needs to root its convictions in the core gospel by allowing the crux of the matter to shine through. As the gospel moves beyond theology, the power of that gospel will again begin to transform lives. Bill Love accomplishes in a powerful way all that he intended.

He states, "From the very first, something of the core gospel was missing in our Restoration preaching. For the purposes of our unfolding story, the most significant finding is that each of our first forefathers gave us the atonement with one hand and took it back with the other."

I, too, in the same way, give Love's book a good recommendation, yet take it back with the other hand cautioning anyone from using the results without knowing Love's own acknowledged limitations. Many do not take into consideration that the restoration heritage brought us to our present position and would use this material to criticize. Bill Love possesses a different spirit.

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You Can't Get There From Here: Reflections on "Word Studies"

By Stanley H. Helton

THE DUST JACKET on a book I recently scanned applauded the author's "word studies." Having some competency in Greek, i decided to start reading there. Under what claimed to be a word-study, I found a digest of what others had said about the words the author wished to discuss. Lest others might think that a word study is merely the compiling of what "experts" have said, I share the following suggestions.

First, let's discuss a few word-study fallacies. (1) The **etymological fallacy** occurs when we trace a word back to an earlier stage of its development and then carry the older meaning to a later occurrence. Our word "nice," for example, comes from the Latin **nescius** and suggests "ignorant." Yet, to call people "nice" today is a compliment. Etymology, indeed, rarely tells us what a word means at a later time. (Cf. "prevent" in 1 Thess. 4:15,KJV.)

(2) **Anachronism** is when a word has continued to develop and we transport the later meaning to an earlier occurrence. In more than one sermon on Romans 1:16,17 has a preacher informed his audience that the "gospel is God's dynamite," because the word for "power" (**dynimis**) is the word from which "dynamite" derives. neither Paul nor the Romans knew of dynamite; "power" conveys the idea sufficiently, nothing more needs to be said. Also, no preacher would tell his listeners that "God loves a **hilarious** giver," though the English word "hilarious" comes from the word translated "cheerful."

(3) Perhaps the most common mistake is the **root-word** fallacy. There is often no connection between what a word means and the various components of the word. For example, in 1 Corinthians 4:1 the word "servant" is **huperetes** composed of the words **hypo** (under, down) and **eretes** (rower). From these clues, William Barclay (**New Testament Words**, [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975], s.v.) noted that a **hyperetes** was "a rower on the lower banks of a trieme" (An ancient Greek ship), thus the lowest kind of servant. While the word denoted a rower in 500 B.C., by the time of the New Testament the word refers to a servant, plain and simple.

A preacher commenting on 1 Peter 2:21, wrote, "The Lord is our underwriting." Underwriting? This was his attempt to convey the Greek **hypogrammos**, which is adequately "model," "pattern," or "example." The Greek term has no connection with the English word "underwrite." denoting, "to write beneath; subscribe" or "assume responsibility for."

We commit the root-word fallacy when dealing with the word for church **ecclesia**. Writers often assert, based on the components of the word, that it means "the called out." Certainly the word is composed of **ek** (out, out from) and **klesis** (calling, invitation), but compound words often convey more meaning than the individual parts of which they are composed. And words, when compounded, often lose the individual meanings of the parts. The word **ecclesia** had the common connotation in the first century of "assembly"; earlier in the word's history it denoted political gathering. If one wishes to say that the church is the "called out," let them do so based on a text that says so, not on the word's roots.

When it comes to how to do a word study, there are two ways to view a word: **diachronic** and **synchronic**.

The first deals with a word's development over time. F. F. Bruce, in **The Canon of Scripture** (Downers Grove,IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988: 17, 18) does wonderful diachronic study on the word "canon," which originally referred to a reeded plant used as a measuring standard. Afterwards "canon" came to mean "a series of marks, as on a ruler," and still later, a "list." Christians applied this last sense of "canon" to the list of accepted books of the New Testament, and finally to the New Testament itself. The reader should note—this is crucial to my point—that the original meaning of "reed," is irrelevant for understanding the later meaning of "accepted books." Though diachronic studies are interesting, they are usually of little value in determining meanings of New Testament words.

A synchronic word study, on the other hand, seeks to study a word at a particular time (cf. "gay" in 1890 and 1990). In discovering the meaning of New Testament words we should seek how the word was used in the Hellenistic world of the first century. More specifically, it is important to know how Jewish Christians in the first century used words. The New Testament, to state the obvious, therefore, provides an excellent source for uncovering the meaning of a word used by New Testament writers.

I invite you now to walk through a word study with me. (Realizing that most cannot work with Greek, I have limited my work to English sources.)

In James 2:2, the text speaks of a rich man who "comes into your **assembly**," but the margin of the 1611 KJV has, *Gr. Synagogue.* If the Greek has synagogue, why would one translate it assembly? How are you to decide which is the correct translation? Is an English reader at the mercy of the scholars? Not yet. First, we must find every occurrence of the word **synagogue** in the New Testament. In the back of **Young's Analytical Concordance**, there is an "Index-Lexicon to the New Testament." Here you would look up the transliterated word SUNAGOGE where you would find that it occurs 57 times in the New Testament: 55, the KJV translated "synagogue"; once, "assembly"; and once, "congregation." Now, you can look in the main section of Young's under each of the English words and find every occurrence of the Greek word in an English translation.

Only once did the KJV translate the word "congregation"; this is Acts 14:43. Why? If you will note in the KJV our word also occurs in verse 42. When the KJV was translated, it was common among literary people to use synonyms to effect a more melodious style. That is what happened here: "congregation" is synonymous with "synagogue" of the previous verse. By this act we have altered our quest: instead of seeking what a word meant in James, we must now ask why—since the word is usually rendered "synagogue"—have the translators not translated it so in James?

Of every occurrence of the word, then, except one, it refers to the Jewish synagogue. What happens in the letter from James if we replace "assembly" with "synagogue"? It works. Considering that James's letter is thought to be one of the earliest documents in our New Testament and that James's influence was primarily among Jewish believers. it works especially well. We also find that we agree with J. W. Roberts (**The Letter of James**, Living Word Commentary [Austin: Sweet Publishing, 1977], 70-71; for a discussion on this word, also see Martin Dibelius and Heinrich Greevan, **James: A Commentary on the Epistle of James**, translated by Michael A. Williams, Hermenia [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975] 132-136).

To go beyond this point requires special skills and tools. Our next step, for example, might be to search the writings of Philo, a jewish contemporary of Paul, or Josephus, and other Hellenistic writers of the first century, to see if there are other uses of our word—there are computer programs that can search these authors in minutes, but unfortunately one must read Greek to use them.

To do a legitimate word-study will require more time and effort than compiling the opinion of the "experts;" but, then, the rewards will be greater for the preacher/teacher and those who hear him.

[Stan has been selected to be the preacher for the church in Florence, SC. After June 14 contact him at PO Box 956, 29503.]

"Christians do not become 'sons of God' by their works, but it is by their works alone that they prove themselves to be 'sons of God.'"
(John Mackey)

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The Way to Unity

By Dennis Conner

"HOW GOOD IT IS," said the Psalmist, "for brethren to dwell together in unity." Nothing in the realm of the spiritual provides as true a testimony to the power of God to break down the barriers erected by sin and human pride as the visible unity of Christ's church. By the same token, there is nothing more destructive, and few stumblingblocks as fatal, as the division and factionalism that often exist among God's people.

The apostle Paul was well aware that wherever flawed human beings congregate there exists the real possibility for difficulties and disagreements. That awareness is sensed in his letter to the church in Philippi. The generally positive tone of the Philippian letter should not blind us to the tactful concerns Paul expressed about the underlying tensions in Philippi that could easily disrupt the unity of the church if allowed to go unchecked. For instance, there are five exhortations to be of the same mind, like-minded, or of one mind. In Philippians 2:14 the church is instructed, "Do all things without murmuring and disputing" (NKJV). In 4:2 there is the direct reference to the problem between Euodia and Synteche. Apparently, not all were of the same mind, there was some murmuring and disputing, and the problem between the two sisters in the Lord was severe enough to warrant a direct reference by Paul. While generally healthy, the church in Philippi was not immune to the realities of community life.

Earlier Paul had encouraged the church to be steadfast and to be willing to work together for the good of the gospel (1:27). They should also be willing to suffer together for Christ's sake (1:29-30). Such a ministry would be impossible without a unified spirit. It is the concern for unity that dominates the mind of the apostle at this point in the letter, and it is an obvious concern that should be no less dominant in our minds today. But how do we insure that blessed unity? In Philippians 2:3-8 Paul reveals to the Philippians the way to a unified church.

"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others." This exhortation to humility follows directly on the heels of an appeal to unity in verses 1-2, a unity expressed in likemindedness, mutual love, and harmony. Paul's point? Unity requires humility. The high road to unity follows the lowly path of humility.

Paul describes humility first negatively, then positively. Negatively, it is the absence of selfishness and ego. The humble disciple refuses to seek his own glory, realizing that individual ambition must give way to corporate goals. Positively, humility puts the needs of others first and thinks more highly of others than of self. It all boils down to an outward focus versus an inward focus. Think of it. A church in which each believer puts the needs of others before his or her own! A church in which believers are so busy taking care of others that no one has occasion to complain, "Nobody cares about me." A church in which it is more important for you to be right than me! A church full of like-minded people in attitudes and goals. A church at peace. All we need to do is to get some humility. But how do we go about getting it? Well, there's the rub. There is no quick fix. No twelve-step programs, no thirty-day courses. As a matter of fact, humility is not something you get. It is something you become. All right, then, how do we become humble?

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation ("but emptied himself," NASV), taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 3:5-8). In other words, humility comes by being focused on the life and cross of Jesus. In this, one of the most profound and magnificent texts in all Holy Scripture, Paul gives us a glimpse into the mind of Jesus. Ralph Herring's word of caution is appropriate here. He writes, "We shall do well to loose the sandals from our feet as we approach (this text), for we stand on holy ground." The call to imitate the attitude of Christ presupposes an understanding, to some degree at least, of the experience of Christ. How did Jesus approach His holy ministry? What attitude shaped His every act?

It is not without significance that the depiction of Christ's experience reveals a consistently downward progression. We see the humility of Christ beginning with His status in heaven before He became clothed with flesh. From eternity Christ existed in the "form" of God. All that makes God to be God was found in Christ. Yet, He emptied Himself. He did not regard the status and advantages of His position as something to be held on to at all costs. Instead, Christ relinquished the glory and adoration of His heavenly position and exchanged one form for another; the form of God for the form of a servant. Christ's servanthood meant sharing our humanity. He became one with us, identifying with us fully. Can you understand something of the sheer magnitude of this move from heaven to earth? In doing this, He wasn't moving to a better neighborhood! He was moving to the slums to experience firsthand the degradation of human sin and rebellion. The downward spiral of humility finally led Him to surrender not only His position, but His very life. Christ's humble obedience to the will of God in serving the need of man led to death. But note that Paul is deliberate in pointing out that it was not "merely" death; rather, it was a death of humiliation and scorn on the cross.

Such humility. Such utter selflessness. It should leave us speechless as we behold it. Awed. I was a self-willed, rebellious sinner. Lost. Dead. Beyond hope. I needed someone to save me, and Christ, the model Self-Giver, recognizing that need, humbled Himself and became my servant at the cost of Himself. The model Self-Giver. That is Paul's whole point. Jesus Christ is the model of the kind of others-oriented humility that leads to unity and oneness in our spiritual relations. The gist of it all, the bottom line, is that the way to experience the joy of oneness in the community of believers is by being Jesus to one another. Be to others what Christ has been to you—a humble servant.

Can we do this? Wrong question. Are we willing to do this? There it is. Are we willing to release the death-grip on our egos? To empty ourselves? Are we willing to discard the robes of self-exaltation and put on the humble garments of the servant? Are we willing to pay the price of obedience to the will of God in this matter? Do we dare to think and to act like Jesus so that the kingdom may thrive? How we answer these questions determines the contributions we make to the unity, or disunity, of the church of God wherever we happen to be. May God grant us the strength to be Jesus to one another...the grace to be humble.

[PO Box 1219, Yadkinville, NC 27055]

Small Church Workshop—A Success

By Dennis Conner

"THIS IS TRULY A GREAT WORK. I thank God for the positive impact and encouragement that I received.... The church in the Carolinas has been strengthened...."

This was our first time to attend and we truly enjoyed it. We believe we obtained some good ideas that may help us in our work with the small church here...." "Very positive, optimistic." These were just some of the observations regarding the seventh annual Small Church Workshop that was conducted by the Yadkinville Church of Christ last month. The theme was "From Glory to Glory: Developing the Potential of the Small Church." A record 37 participants were registered for this year's workshop and the consensus was that this workshop was the best yet.

The Small Church Workshop is designed to help small churches (generally defined by church growth experts as churches with 200 or fewer in Sunday morning worship attendance) to understand how they fit into God's universal scheme, to explore practical ways to become more effective, and to address the challenges and difficulties that are unique to the small church. Year in and year out the greatest strength of the workshop is the strong sense of fellowship that is experienced and the openness that allows for the honest sharing of ideas and experiences. Of course, when such openness is allowed there are bound to be divergent ideas and opinions expressed. These are typically handled by the brethren attending with fairness and a willingness to give to brethren the benefit of any doubt.

The downside of this year's workshop was that the record attendance should only be 37. With approximately 190 churches in the Carolinas with 150 members or less, it is discouraging that more do not see the value of such an effort. Two years ago brother Johnny Melton called the Small Church Workshop "the best kept secret in the Carolinas." Well, we want to get the word out. There is something good going on every year in Yadkinville, NC, and we want you to be a part of it! Start making your plans now for the eighth annual workshop, tentatively set for May 12-13, 1994.

Brotherhood News

By Michael Mobley

MOCKSVILLE...The 1993 session of CAROLINA BIBLE CAMP will begin June 20. Wilson Burton, Camp Manager, may be reached at (704)782-0326 or 142 Mary Cir., Concord, NC 28025 if interested in camp. RALEIGH...The BROOKS AVE. CHURCH invites everyone to their NC Evangelism Seminar, August 13-15. The theme will be "Fruitful In Every Good Work" and the featured speaker will be F. LaGard Smith. CARY...Ladies Day, November 6, with Sandra Humphrey, speaker. The theme will be "Back to Basics." NASHVILLE, TN...The ANTIOCH CHURCH announces the 1993 JUBILEE, June 30-July 3. The theme will be "To God Be the Glory." For information contact the Antioch Church at 2142 Antioch Pike, Nashville, TN 37013. BIRMINGHAM, AL...The HOMEWOOD CHURCH announces "LIFTOFF! 1993" their annual youth rally, August 6-7. The featured speaker for the event will be JEFF WALLING. For more information contact the church at 265 West Oxmoor Road, Birmingham, AL 35209. DALLAS, TX...Herald of Truth invites you to the FIFTH ANNUAL NATIONAL FAMILY CONFERENCE, September 23-26, 1993, call 1-800-234-7995 for information or to register. FORT WORTH,TX...The World Bible Translation Center is overwhelmed with requests from Russia for New Testaments in their native tongue! They are currently able to print 100,000 Russian/English parallel New Testaments for $0.87 per copy or 100,000 complete Russian Bibles for $1.75. You may send your support to PO Box 820648, Fort Worth, TX 76182. JACKSON, TN...The Way of life Television Ministry produces videos on a variety of current moral and social issues. The speakers are David Sain and E. Ray Jerkins and Dr. Bill Flatt. For a list of titles, call 1-800-851-2766.

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Celebrating Twenty-five Years of Training Young People

Lads to Leaders/Leaderettes

EDITORIAL

By Johnny R. Melton

RON NEWBERRY GUEST EDITED this issue of **Carolina Christian**. Articles by young people from the Friendly Avenue church in Greensboro, NC are featured. There were more articles than could be used in one issue of the magazine, so the August issue will also contain articles from these outstanding young people.

1993 is the twenty-fifth year of *Lads to Leaders/Leaderettes*. **Carolina Christian** is happy to salute this excellent program. We are especially proud of the young people whose speeches are presented on these pages. Read these speeches with deep gratitude for these young people and their parents and with a large measure of reassurance for the future of the church.

Blue Ridge Encampment

I was privileged to participate in this year's installment of Blue Ridge Encampment. There were Christians from Michigan to Florida who gathered for a week of family-style fun and fellowship. Jack Exum, Willard Tate, John Stevens and Dan Blazer were among the speakers.

Blue Ridge Encampment has been enjoyed by thousands of Christians from across the country for more than forty years. Carolina Christians and readers of **Carolina Christian** are encouraged to make plans to meet next year at "Wonderful Blue Ridge."

Higher Education

When Terry Gunnells moved to Columbia, SC to work with the St. Andrews Road church in the mid-eighties, he established an extension of Alabama Christian School of Religion, and began encouraging men and women to pursue higher education. Terry himself was diligent in his own educational pursuits, earning the Doctor of Ministry degree from Lutheran Southern Theological Seminary in Columbia.

When Terry moved to Charlotte to work with the Providence Road church, he moved the extension of Southern Christian University (as ACSR is now known) with him. Over the years a number of Carolinians have studied the Bible

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All items to be printed in a given month's issue should reach the editor no later than the 20th day of the preceeding month. For example, an item to be included in the July issue must be received by June 20.

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and Bible-related subjects in these extension courses. Some have studied for their own enrichment, others have pursued academic degrees.

Even though Dr. Gunnells is teaching full-time for SCU at the home campus in Montgomery, AL, he continues to work with the Carolina extension, teaching and encouraging students in the noble quest of biblical knowledge. For the past two years I have worked with Terry and SCU, teaching courses in Charlotte. On June 10 SCU held commencement exercises for 1993 graduates. Among those who earned degrees were the following from the Carolina extension: Master of Science, Robert Curry, Duncan, SC; Eugene Fadley, Charlotte, NC; and David Smith, Salisbury, NC. Even though he is no longer in the Carolinas, we were glad to note that David Pharr, our former editor, received the Bachelor of Arts degree.

Southern Christian University will continue to conduct both graduate and undergraduate courses in the Carolinas as long as there is sufficient interest. The courses can be taken for college credit or they may be audited for personal enrichment. Contact Dr. Gunnells or Dr. James Crabtree, Academic Dean at SCU,(800)351-4040, for class offerings in the Fall.

Harding University Graduate School of Religion is also offering extension courses in the Carolinas. The Cole Mill Road church in Durham has been providing a site for a class to meet. This Fall Dr. Paul Watson, pulpit minister for the Cole Mill Road church will offer a course surveying the outstanding ideas of the Old Testament: the doctrines of God, man, the covenant, and how the Old Testament witnesses to Christ. The course, "Religious Teaching of the Old Testament" can be taken on either a credit or audit basis. For more information contact Robert Brady, Director of Admissions, HUGSR, (901)761-1356 [call collect].

Guest Editor

The Young People Today Are the Church of Today

By Ron Newberry

WE HAVE ALL HEARD the old adage that the young people in our churches today are the church of tomorrow. It has long been my contention that today's young people are the church of today.

The contrast between those two points of view is rather dramatic. One holds that one day the church will allow its young people to be involved in the work and the operation of the church. The other requires that they be immersed in the work of the church now. The philosophy of "one day they'll be allowed to be involved" is bankrupt. It ignores their intelligence, thwarts their desire to be involved, impedes their growth and development and bungles an opportunity to develop spiritual patterns when they are the most impressionable. Could the alarming dropout rate of our young people in the church be attributed to their lack of involvement and training while they are young?

When I say "train," I mean more than a Bible study class or occasionally serving communion. Training our young people means allowing them to perform important tasks under the supervision of those who know how to do it. That implies giving them the opportunity to fail as well as to succeed. But if and when they fail, they to do so in an environment where there is a safety net. They are loved, not condemned. They are nourished, not scolded. They are gently corrected, not chastised.

When I was just a small boy, my mother would not let me visit the stream near my grandparents's home. She was afraid that I would wade in over my head and drown. She repeatedly told me, "Son, as soon as you learn how to swim, you can go in the water." I was never sure exactly how I was supposed to learn how to swim if I was never allowed in the water.

How do we expect our young men to lead singing, speak in public, teach a class, make responsible decisions, and learn self-discipline if they are never given a forum in which they can train? How do we expect our young ladies to learn how to teach, how to speak or to lead singing in a Ladies's Day setting, how to learn how to work as a team if they are never given an outlet for their talents? How can they learn to swim if they never go in the water?

One of the most outstanding programs ever developed by Christians to cultivate boys and girls into godly men and women is the *Lads to Leaders/Leaderettes* program developed by Jack Zorn. The program celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary this year. It has been responsible for training thousands of young people to take responsibility for their actions and for the development of their talents. They are furnished opportunities in a structured environment to learn how to lead songs, read Scripture orally, debate, produce videos, conduct puppet plays, speak in public, memorize Scripture, write essays, and much more. By participating in these activities, they not only grow in their leadership capacities in roles appropriate for both men and women, they transfer these skills into their school work and classrooms as well as their communities.

Lads to Leaders/Leaderettes is designed for young people from the third grade through college. They can choose what areas are of interest to them and reflect their talents. It is flexible enough to fit any size congregation and requires very little money to operate. Of course, every congregation can invest as much money as it deems necessary. However, it is a very cost-effective training program.

Every year there is a national convention held in the Opryland hotel complex in Nashville, Tennessee. Last year over 6,000 Christians met over the Easter weekend for national competition. Trophies and ribbons are given as rewards for excellence. Plans this year include having 10,000 Christians from all over the country meet to celebrate twenty-five years of developing young people.

The Friendly Avenue congregation in Greensboro has been involved in the program for five years. It has been a tremendous boon to our entire congregation. One of the major reasons it has impacted our congregation so positively is because we have such a high adult-child ratio. It has been almost a one-to-one ration! We have never witnessed such interest in any other program. When this many adults are directly involved with our youth, what kind of message does this send to our children? It declares just how much we believe in them and how much we care about them.

This program requires a number of dedicated adults. It has to have a high degree of commitment from the leadership as well. However, if churches are looking for ways to teach their children Christian principles, help them develop their God given abilities, do it in a Christian environment, and have great coaching from adults, then they ought to investigate this program.

As mentioned above, one aspect of this program is the development of speaking skills. This issue of **Carolina Christian** contains the transcripts of some of the speeches delivered at this year's convention by young people at Friendly Avenue.

As you read them, please keep in mind two important items. Remember that these are speeches and not written essays. They were intended to communicate in an oral medium not a written one. Therefore, they are more conversational than one would expect in an article intended just for readers.

Secondly, observe the ages of each speaker. While these speeches do not display an excellence resulting from years of speech writing and presentation, you no doubt will be impressed with the clarity of ideas, the organizational skills and depth of thought demonstrated in these speeches.

One last point needs to be made. Each year the program has a specific theme. The theme for 1993 was, "Christ and His Mission: I Must Be about My Father's Business." Every speech deals with that theme. You will be amazed at the variety of approaches to the same theme.

Friendly Avenue is the center for expansion of the *Lads to Leaders/Leaderettes* program in the Carolinas, Virginia and east Tennessee. Please let us know of any questions you may have and how we might help you launch into this exciting approach to the maturation and formation of our youth in the Lord's church. If you wish to know more about this program, you can contact David Galloway in care of Friendly Avenue church of Christ, 5101 W. Friendly Avenue, Greensboro, NC 27410 or Jack Zorn, P.O. Box 6231, Montgomery, Alabama 36106.

I wish to thank Johnny Melton for providing me the opportunity to edit this issue of **Carolina Christian**. It is a privilege and an honor to be associated with him and this periodical.

[Ron preaches for the Friendly Avenue church in Greensboro, NC. He has recently been added to the Board of Directors of **Carolina Christian.***]*

My Dream Is Coming True

By Dr. Jack Zorn

IT BEGAN AS AN IDEA. A program was desperately needed to help the youth of the sixties to overcome the depravity of their time and to emerge as victors for the Lord and for their country. I saw this immediate need for leadership training, and thus, the idea of a *Lads to Leaders* program was born. The program's focus was training the nation's youth in moral leadership. Some thought the idea was only a dream. As with all new ideas, critics surfaced in force, but this idea was more than a dream. The idea became reality in 1969.

I began with eight boys in the Middle Georgia town of Warner Robbins. The boys were in need of direction and zealously faced the new challenges I laid before them. The third year they were enrolled in the program the students had taught and baptized twelve of their classmates. One of these students even sacrificed milk money to call me for a Scripture reference he needed. The Lads began to speak at local and civic organizations. Word spread about these young men and their unique presentations. Soon they were given the opportunity to speak before Governor Lester Maddox of Georgia. Governor Maddox voiced an "Amen" to their comments on the need for respect between children and their parents in America. The boys were also able to speak for Jimmy Carter when he was governor of Georgia.

The program expanded over state lines in 1972 when I moved to Oxford, Alabama and continued the work. Christians in cities like Anniston, Birmingham, and Montgomery, Alabama as well as Macon and Albany, Georgia saw new young leaders on television and caught a glimse of the success the program would come to enjoy.

A move to Montgomery, Alabama stimulated the program's growth when I took the program to the collegiate level. Working hand-in-hand with Dr. George S. Benson, I took speaking teams to high schools, civic clubs, and workshops in other states. These workshops were the seeds that brought forth an immeasurable crop.

This year, due to expansion efforts over many years, over 6,000 attended the *Lads to Leaders* National Convention. Not only has the idea moved from thought to reality, it has moved from country to country. Some attendants were foreign citizens from Russia, Japan, and East Germany. A program exists in Naples, Italy and our manual is being translated into Russian.

In a small house on South Hull Street in Montgomery, Alabama, I continue to work daily on expanding the idea. I want to leave a rich heritage for our people to carry on. I envision offices across the United States serving as headquarters for training. I see the establishment of a National *Lads to Leaders/Leaderettes* Office Building. This building is to house an Alumni Center, lodging for visiting groups, a Prevent Disaster center, training and outreach facilities, and general offices. The headquarters will serve as home base for a new kind of soldier. I see us, with the Lord's guidance, building soldiers for Christ's cause with character and integrity. I see the program growing beyond the reaches of my imagination. As the twenty-fifth year approaches, I see the next twenty-five years as a period of phenomenal and astounding growth.

5th Grade

Four Steps to Completing Christ's Mission

By Ashley Gravlee

WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY defines mission as, "a special duty or task one is sent to carry out." As my earthly father's mission in the Air Force was to carry out different assignments, our heavenly Father has assignments for us in His mission. There are four steps in completing Christ's mission. A mission that, upon completion, will bring eternal satisfaction.

To create within us a willingness to serve others, let's consider Jesus' parable of the good Samaritan and four lessons taken from it.

First, if I love, I will serve. In this parable, a victim of thieves was tenderly served because a Samaritan had compassion on him. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was approximately seventeen miles long and descended some three thousand feet. Its rough terrain was conducive to robbers ambushing victims on a regular basis. With this story, the "red and bloody way" (as the road has been called) had claimed another victim.

Let's remember, one of the springboard thoughts behind this parable was the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Lev. 19:18). As an example of one who did just that, the Samaritan tended to the needs of another.

Second, if I care, I will share myself with others. If the love of God fills my heart, serving others will occupy my life. Trying to impress a publisher, a young lady began to read some of her poetic creativity. "Love is like the autumn leaf, falling gracefully from its branch above, only to caress...." "Stop," said the publisher, "let me tell you what love is. Love is a daddy working overtime to pay for a child's special birthday present. Love is a mother tenderly rocking a feverish infant in the silent loneliness of an early morning. Love is a son cutting and splitting wood so his widowed mother can stay warm during the winter months. Love is a friend standing by the side of a friend in time of need." How true! We could accurately describe service as "love in working clothes."

Third, even I can be a servant. In this parable, the heroic servant was none other than a lowly Samaritan. Samaritans were often the object of prejudice and viewed with much disdain among the Jews. The Jews's contempt for Samaritans might be seen in the lawyer's response to the Lord's question, "Which was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?" In answer, the lawyer refused to identify the Samaritan by nationality. He simply spoke of him as "He that showed mercy" (Luke 10:37). Still, it was the Samaritan that rendered service and not the priest or Levite of this story. Even the Samaritan could serve others.

Fourth, I must be a servant to be a true Christian. In this parable, those thought to be religious, the priest and the Levite, were not religious at all. Priests in the day of Jesus were sons of Aaron from the tribe of Levi. They were taken from man by God and appointed for man in things pertaining to God. Levites were the descendants of three sons of Levi. Levites were sanctified by God and given the responsibility of assisting their priestly brethren. One would have expected the priest or the Levite to have assisted the victim of the thieves. Instead they passed by. Perhaps they were afraid of falling to the same plight as the victim. Still further, it could have been they did not wish to be delayed from official duties. For whatever reason, they refused to help a fellow human being in need and stood in violation of God's law.

To be like my Master, I must live like a servant. Three philosophies are seen in this parable. First, there is the philosophy of the thieves: "What is your's is mine!" Second, there is the philosophy of the priest and the Levite: "What is mine is mine!" Third, there is the philosophy of the Samaritan: "What is mine is yours!" The latter of these is the philosophy we should adopt and live by. Our Lord adorned Himself with humility to serve others and to be like Him, we must also gird ourselves with humility to serve one another (1 Pet. 5:5).

Many have traveled the dangerous road from Jerusalem to Jericho, but none have traveled it better than the compassionate servant in this "Parable of the Good Samaritan." This truly is an example of what "Christ and His Mission" is all about.

Each one of us might have different assignments, but we have one mission. If we follow the steps Christ has given us, we shall have eternal satisfaction.

In closing, I would like to leave you with this poem:

If you can't be a highway, just be a trail,
If you can't be the sun, just be a star
For it isn't by size you will or fail–
Be the best of whatever you are.
—Author Unknown

College Freshman

His Mission: To Die

By Chad Merritt

THERE IS A STORY of an engineer who worked on a drawbridge across a large river. With different levers, he operated a monstrous set of gears that lifted the bridge for traffic on the river, or closed it for the oncoming train.

One day, the engineer took his young son to work with him. The boy was fascinated by the bridge. It was not until the span had opened to allow the passage of a ship that the father noticed the questions had stopped, and his son had left the control room. He looked out the window and saw his son climbing on the teeth of the gears. As he began to run for his son, he heard the whistle of an approaching train.

His pulse quickened. If he closed the bridge, there would be no time to save his son. He had to make a choice. Either his son would be killed by the gears, or a trainload of innocent passengers would be killed. A horrible dilemma mandated a horrible decision. The engineer knew what he had to do. He pulled the lever.

This is an incredible story. It's often used to describe Christ's sacrifice. And there are many parallels. But there is something wrong in this story that cannot be overlooked. It's shown in Acts 2:22,23, "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you with miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through Him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross."

"God's set purpose and foreknowledge." This means one thing: the cross was no accident. It was part of a master plan that was formed at the beginning of the earth. Jesus planned His death, His sacrifice for our sins. And that has always been His mission.

He began the mission of His Father, a realized goal that He knew from the beginning. To set the world straight by saving man from his own sins. By giving him ultimate forgiveness for all time, through the sacrifice of His Son. And so, "the Word became flesh," and God sent His Son to the earth. The hope of all men, He came to earth, knowing that He would be killed. God became man, in order to show His forgiveness, His grace, and His Love.

God's Son began that mission wondrously. From the moment He declared, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing," people knew that something was happening. Whether they thought that it was simply Joseph's son gone mad, or they were amazed as He walked through the crowd that was trying to send Him to His death, none knew that God's plan had begun—except one, His Son.

It is in Galilee that men began to learn of the Son of Man. "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns, also, because that is why I was sent." And then Jesus called the "fishers of men," disciples who would cast their nets and catch a world of men for God. And later in Galilee, we find for the first time in history that a man has the power to say, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." Those words, that power, that forgiveness is even more spectacular than the healing that followed His words.

Jesus begins His physical journey as well as His spiritual one. And it is an amazing one, greater and stranger than all others. Jesus teaches, heals, resurrects, and performs many other miracles. And finally, in private, when asked by Jesus Himself, Peter finally answers that He is "The Christ of God." It is then, for the first time, that Jesus speaks of the final part of His long journey in the world.

And it is just days later when Jesus takes a giant step towards this end, towards His own death. "As the time approached for Him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem." The Son of God turns His face directly into the shadow of the cross, shining His light and chasing away the darkness.

Jesus continues His journey, spreading His word throughout the land, finally into Jerusalem. He enters the city that will bring His death, being praised by a great crowd. And He weeps for the city and for His people. His Father's mission is almost complete.

Less than a week later He has been betrayed, deserted, arrested, mocked, beaten, and disowned. Jesus had taken the cup of woe, choosing to die Himself rather than have the world die because of its evil. And so, the final part of the plan was set in motion.

Jesus was led to Calvary, His hands nailed to a beam of wood like a common criminal. And even then, His grace was absolute. "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." He is willing to pardon those who are killing Him, and He even extends His grace to a crucified criminal.

And even in this most divine act, we are reminded that He is a man. The words of the man, not only the divine, but the man. "My God, my God!," He cried, "Why have you forsaken me?" He is alone. The sins of the world for all ages are upon Him. God's Son is the sin-bearer, burdened with the sins of the people. Jesus is now alone, the Godhead is disjointed, and the unity is dissolved.

And then the end came. God on a cross utters His final words in life. "It is finished." And just as He had said, just as He had promised, on the third day He rose to life, conquering death, having already conquered Satan. The mission was done, His Father's business completed.

Were it a war—this would be the aftermath.

Were it a symphony—this would be the second between the final note and the first applause.

Were it a journey—this would be the sigh of home.

Were it a storm—this would be the sun, piercing the clouds.

But it wasn't. It was a Messiah. And this was a sigh of joy.

"Father!" (The voice is hoarse.)
The voice that called forth the dead,
the voice that taught the willing,
now says, "Father!"
"Father!"
The two are again one.
The abandoned is now found.
The schism is now bridged.
"Father." He smiles weakly. "It's over."
Satan's vultures have been scattered.
Death has been damned.
The sun is out.
The Son is out.
"Take me home."
Yes, take Him home.
Come ten thousands angels!
Take this prince to His king
Take this son to His father
Take this pilgrim to His home.
(He deserves a rest.)
Bless You holy ambassador
Go Home death slayer
Rest well sweet soldier
The battle is over.
The mission is done.
—Max Lucado

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The 1993 NC Evangelism Seminar

PAUL TOLD THE COLOSSIANS that he prayed that they "may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," and that they "walk worthy of the LORD, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God...." The theme of the 1993 North Carolina Evangelism Seminar is "Fruitful in Every Good Work." An inviting array of topics and speakers is scheduled for this event sponsored by the Brooks Avenue congregation in Raleigh on August 13-15.

This year marks the 22nd year for the evangelism seminar. Beginning in 1971, the Brooks Avenue congregation made the seminar an annual event until 1992, when the congregation decided to host the National Campus Ministers's Seminar in place of the evangelism seminar. Exciting plans are being made to make this year's seminar an uplifting spiritual feast.

The seminar begins on Friday night with songs, prayers, and preaching. On Saturday four and one-half hours of instruction will be offered in eight capacity building tracks, emphasizing ways to become "fruitful in every good work," and the day will close with songs, prayers, and a special teaching service. On Sunday three special lessons will be delivered.

Saturday's Capacity Building Tracks

The Saturday tracks will consist of 23 classes that will emphasize the seminar theme, helping attenders to become increasingly "fruitful in every good work." Among the track topics and the presenters will be the following:

Family—Dr. Bob Rigdon, minister of the church in Sylva, NC and a faculty member in the counseling department at Western Carolina University, and Dr. Paul Watson, minister for the Cole Mill Road congregation in Durham, NC, will address ways to strengthen the Christian family.

Missions—Ron Edwards, minister in Jacksonville, NC, will speak on work in the Caribbean. L. E. Cranford of Nashville, TN will emphasize work in Egypt. Ernest Stewart, missionary to Israel and a minister in Dalton, GA, will present information about work among the Arabs and Jews in the Middle East. Julio Alfonso, minister in Cuba, will discuss the opportunities in Cuba. Each presenter will identify ways in which individuals and congregations can become more involved in missions.

Evangelism—Workers from North Carolina who participated in this spring's outreach effort in inner city Houston will present information about teaching inner city dwellers. David Leach of the North Raleigh congregation will address church planting. Ross Thomson and Mike Dublin, ministers of the Raleigh congregations, Brooks Avenue and Rochester Heights, respectively, will explore multi-cultural issues in evangelism and suggest ways of reaching persons who are culturally different.

Benevolence—Bill Stuart, a deacon at Brooks Avenue and assigned to the Good Samaritan Ministry, Tom Slaughter, director of AGAPE of NC and a deacon at the Friendly Avenue church in Greensboro, and Johnny Melton, minister for the church in Hickory, NC and Editor of **Carolina Christian**, will explain ways of caring for and meeting the needs of the poor, the homeless, and others who need special acts of kindness.

Teaching—Janice Stuart of Brooks Avenue will host a display of instructional materials and activities that several teachers have found to be especially helpful in teaching children. David Mills, an elder at Brooks Avenue, will present sessions on ways to enhance thinking skills in Bible Classes who have learning disabilities and/or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorders.

Seniors—Dr. Dan Blazer, a deacon at Brooks Avenue and the dean of the Duke University School of Medicine, and Dr. Emol Fails of Brooks Avenue will examine approaches for enhancing service to and among older Christians.

Women—Anita Alfonso of Cuba will speak on teaching women in difficult environments. Members of the Women's Prayer Ministry at Brooks Avenue will discuss the benefits of a women's prayer ministry and how to initiate and maintain such a ministry. The seminar's featured speaker, LaGard Smith, will address a women's class on "Women and the Church."

Youth—David Galloway and youth of the Friendly Avenue congregation in Greensboro, NC will explain the *Lads to Leaders/Leaderettes* program, emphasizing how to initiate and support the program. Youth from North Carolina who participated in the Honduras mission outreach will discuss ways individuals and congregations can become involved in mission work in Honduras. Dennis Conner, minister in Yadkinville, NC, will challenge youth and youth workers to extend themselves in greater service for Christ.

Featured Speaker

LaGard Smith—attorney, professor of law, author, and lecturer—will speak six times, assisting seminar attenders to "increase in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:10). His topics include: "Baptism, the Believer's Wedding Ceremony," "The Cultural Church," "Women and the Church," "The New Age Movement and Its Implications for Christians," "Fallen Spiritual Leaders," and "We Preach Christ Crucified."

Brother Smith divides his time between Malibu, California and Buckland, England, living six months overlooking the Pacific Ocean on the campus of Pepperdine University and six months writing in the hilly region of England known as the Cotswolds. He has written a number of books and is in great demand among the brotherhood as a speaker. Because of his views on current issues facing Christians, he has appeared on many television and radio talk shows—Crossfire, Sally Jessy Raphael, and Hour Magazine, to name a few.

He has preached in Oregon and Idaho, served as District Attorney in Oregon, and directed admissions and professional responsibility for the Oregon State Bar. Among his books are **The Narrated Bible**, a chronological arrangement of the Bible with narrative commentary; **Out on a Broken Limb**, an examination of the ills of the New Age Movement; **Fallen Spiritual Leaders**, a discussion of the temptations facing elders, ministers, and others in positions of leadership within the church; **What Most Women Want**, a view of the biblical role of women; **Meeting God in Quiet Places**, thirty-one parables that bring comfort and refreshment to the values of life and were inspired by his daily walks through the Cotswolds; and the widely acclaimed **The Daily Bible**.

Opportunities will be available for brother Smith to autograph his books.

Agenda

FRIDAY, AUGUST 13

7:00 P.M.—Singing
7:30 P.M.—"Baptism, the Believer's Wedding Ceremony"
9:00 P.M.—Adjournment and housing Assignments

SATURDAY, AUGUST 14

8:00 A.M.—Fellowship with coffee, pastry and fruit
8:30 A.M.—Singing
9:15 A.M.—"Fruitful in Every Good Work" Classes
10:30 A.M.—Break
10:45 A.M.—"Fruitful in Every Good Work" Classes
12:00 Noon—Lunch
1:30 P.M.—"Fruitful in Every Good Work" Classes
3:30 P.M.—Break
7:00 P.M.—Singing
7:30 P.M.—"The New Age Movement and Its Implications for Christians"
9:00 P.M.—Adjournment

SUNDAY, AUGUST 15

9:30 A.M.—"Fallen Spiritual Leaders"
10:30 A.M.—Songs, Prayers, Lord's Supper, Contribution and Sermon, "We Preach Christ Crucified"
12:00 Noon-Break
4:00 P.M.—"Fruitful in Every Good Work"
5:00 P.M.—Adjournment

Location

Activities will be held at the Brooks Avenue facility. Learning activities for children from two years old through the fifth grade will be available throughout the seminar. All youth, grades six through high school, have a special invitation to attend and are encouraged to participate in any of the Saturday classes. The Youth track has been designed with youth in mind. A nursery will be available for young children.

Housing

Housing will be provided by members of the Brooks Avenue congregation on a first come, first served basis. Various hotels and motels are within two or three miles of the church building.

Registration

The registration fee is $15 for individuals, $25 for two family members, and $30 for three or more family members. Registration brochures have been sent to all congregations in North Carolina and many congregations in Virginia and South Carolina. Persons not having access to a registration brochure will find a registration form on pages 11 and 12 which can be either clipped or photo-copied (be sure to fill out both pages).

Attendance

The seminar is designed for youth (sixth grade through high school age), college students, and adults of all ages. Elders, deacons, ministers, and other church members with a special interest in becoming more "fruitful in good works" are especially invited to contribute and gain from this weekend of spiritual enrichment. "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works..." (Eph. 2:10).

12th Grade

Christ's Mission: Service to Others

By Jennifer Galloway

THERE IS AN IMPORTANT STORY in the tenth chapter of Acts that can help us to see the true mission of Christ. This story teaches us how Peter realized what the true mission of Christ is and how Peter carried out this mission in helping Cornelius to become a Christian.

Peter was shown in a vision a great sheet that had all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts and creeping things and fowls of the air. In the vision, the Lord told Peter to kill and eat any of the things that were in the sheet. This bothered Peter because his Jewish background had taught him that only certain things could be eaten, and he could not understand why the Lord was telling him this. Later in the story, Peter will realize what the Lord was really trying to teach him.

Peter is instructed by messengers to go to Caesarea to see a man by the name of Cornelius. As Peter talked with Cornelius he realized that God's vision was sent to teach him that all men should have the opportunity to become children of God and not just the chosen Jews. Peter stated in Acts 10:34-35, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."

Peter was able to realize the true meaning of the words of Jesus in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save the lost." The Son of Man did not come just to seek a certain group of people, He came to seek all those that would respond to His good news. When Jesus as a young boy stated, "I must be about my Father's business," He knew His job was to learn how to serve others and, in so doing, help everyone to know the truth. Just as Peter had developed a desire to serve the Lord, we should be encouraged to develop the same kind of attitude.

It has been pointed out that in a battle there are two very different types of problems: those of the front lines and those of the back lines. On the front, the central problem is the enemy. There are real bullets, there are constant dangers, there are urgent needs, and teamwork is essential. However, farther away from the smell of the powder, secondary issues become more important. People there complain about the food, or about the snoring of the fellow in the next bunk, or about any one of a dozen other things. Or, to shift the imagery, when I sit in the stands at a football game, I may complain that the coffee is cold, but the quarterback who is being blitzed by his opponent has an entirely different set of concerns. Grandstand issues are not playing-field issues.

The same principle applies to Christian living. If we are in the back lines or in the stands, it becomes very easy to major on the minors. Because we are not in the heat of the action, our attention drifts to the trivial, and secondary issues begin to divide us and concern us. But when I am committed to doing a work for the Lord Jesus, and major on those things that really matter, I begin to appreciate those who are my brothers in the battle. Because my attention is not focused on my comfort but on serving my Savior, I am able to give my life to others. That was the attitude Paul tried to teach the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 9:19, when he wrote, "For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more." It is a heart-commitment to the work of the Lord that prevents us from becoming so absorbed in ourselves that we seek only our own things.

At an early stage in the history of Moody Bible Institute, D. L. Moody organized a Bible conference that brought guests from as far away as Europe. Late one night, Moody was walking through the corridors when he noticed that his European guests had, in accordance with their custom, left their shoes in the hall to be cleaned overnight. Moody did not want to disappoint them, so he went down the hall to explain the situation to some of his students and to ask them to help. The first student responded, "Mr. Moody, I came here to study for the ministry, I didn't come here to shine shoes." The rest added their arguments, so Moody graciously dismissed them, and spent the rest of the night polishing those shoes himself.

Mr. Moody could have insisted on his rights and coerced the students into serving, or he could have refused to honor a foreign custom. But he was a man with a servant's heart, who had spent time with the One who said, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28).

6th Grade

Carrying On Christ's Mission

By Joshua Clinard

AS JESUS HUNG ON THE CROSS, just before He died and completed His mission here on earth, He said, "It is finished." It is important for us to understand Jesus' mission because we are instructed to continue this purpose throughout our daily lives. But what was His mission?

John 3:16,17 talks of how God sent His Son into the world so everyone who believes in Him can have eternal life. So the main part of His mission was to seek and save the lost. He did this while on earth by teaching people about the love of God and the need to repent of their sins. Finally, Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice by giving up His life on the cross. It is only through the blood He shed there that anyone can have eternal life. We learn from the cross what it really means to love other people. "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers" (1 John 3:16).

Jesus also demonstrated this love for others while He was here on earth. He used the power God had given Him to meet the needs of other people. His first miracle was changing the water to wine. But more often Jesus used His powers to heal others. For example in John 4, He heals the son of a royal official. Verses 46-54 say:

"Once more He visited Cana in Galilee, where He had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to Him and begged Him to come and heal his son, who was close to death. 'Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders,' Jesus told him, 'you will never believe.' The royal official said, 'Sir, come down before my child dies.' Jesus replied, 'You may go. Your son will live.' The man took Jesus at His word and departed. While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. When he enquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, 'The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour.' Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, 'Your son will live.' So he and all his household believed. This was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed, having come from Judea to Galilee."

Even when Jesus saw hungry people He had compassion on them and was willing to help them. There was the time He fed 5,000 people who came to hear Him preach, but had brought no food. With only five loaves of bread and two fish He fed the whole crowd and even had leftovers. That's pretty amazing! All through Jesus' life He spent a lot of time in prayer, talking to His Father about the needs of others.

Although we cannot perform miracles or die on the cross for the forgiveness of sins, we can continue to carry on His mission today, by using the Bible and talents God has given to us. We can use the Bible to teach people about Jesus and what He did for them, so they can be saved. We can tell them of God's love and grace. We can also set an example for them by our attitude and the things that we do. As Christians we have God's Spirit in our lives. Paul says this Spirit will produce love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. This type of lifestyle will certainly set us apart from the world.

We can SHOW God's love to other people by our actions as a whole church or as individuals. One way is to share what we have with them. At our church we have a special day when all the members can bring items such as clothes, household items, furniture and toys to the building. Then any person in the community can come and get what they need, FREE. Each year before school starts we give out school supplies to children who cannot afford them. Each Sunday following the worship service we have a lunch for all our visitors to make them feel welcome and to get to know people in the congregation.

We can also share our time, abilities, and friendship. We can invite people over to our house for a meal, games, Bible studies, and times of encouragement. We can volunteer our time to community projects. One of the most important things we can do for others, those that are close to us like our family and friends, and those people we do not know, is pray for them. One thing I try to do when I hear about an emergency is pray for the safety of those involved. This is a small yet powerful way to serve others.

As you can see, Jesus' mission had many different aspects. But, in all He did, Jesus tried to bring glory to God. As people who love God we need to find as many ways as possible to carry out His mission and bring glory to Him today and tomorrow. We have no greater purpose in this life or in the next.

10th Grade

Christ's Mission and Mine

By Katherine Seamon

WHILE VISITING IN THE UNITED States, a two-year-old boy named Mihai Salagean put his head down on the table one night at dinner and started mumbling something. His mother told their hostess that he was saying his own prayer in Romanian. After Mihai was through, he sat up and said, "Amen."

Mihai was born February of 1990 in Sibiu, Romania with a birth defect; one leg was shorter than the other. When I heard about him and realized he would not be able to run and play with other children, my heart went out to him.

Christ and His Mission? What is Christ's Mission? Three things come to mind when I hear something about His mission: helping, teaching, and encouraging others. I also believe that Christ's mission is my mission. Therefore, I should do my best to help, teach, and encourage others.

My first assignment is helping others. In John 20:21, Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." Jesus is sending us out into the world to help others. For example, I am sure that you have heard about all the different congregations that have sent people to countries like Honduras and Jamaica to help with mission and medical clinics. Isn't that what Jesus would want us to do?

Another example of helping others brings us back to my story of Mihai in Romania. His father, Aviduia Salagean, was a student in World English School. His teacher was a lady from my congregation, whom I'll call Martha. Mihai's father told Martha about his son's birth defect and asked her if she could help. Through her training as a teacher for World English School, Martha has been instructed that she must refuse such requests for help. So Martha said that she was sorry but she could not help. Mr. Salagean sent her a picture of Mihai showing his shorter leg. Martha saw the picture and felt she had to do whatever she could to help Mihai. Martha then presented Mihai's story to the Elders of our congregation, who agreed that we must try to help. Arrangements were then made for Mihai and his family to come to the United States so that he could have surgery on his leg. Mihai and his parents lived with Martha the three months that they were in the United States.

In Matthew 25:35, Jesus said, "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you took me in, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me." I believe that Jesus would want us to help anyone who came and asked or needed our help.

The second assignment of my mission is to help in teaching others. Matthew 28:19 says, "Go, therefore and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." As a 15-year-old, I cannot go all over the world to every nation to teach and baptize, but I can teach from my own home and congregation. World English School, for example, is a student/teacher program geared to reach people in other nations and bring them closer to God.

There are many ways for each of us to teach. One of the best ways is by example. While Mihai and his family were staying in our country, they worshipped with our congregation. Through Martha and other members of our congregation, Mr. Salagean was taught what it means to live a Christian life. One evening while I was reading the church bulletin, I saw that Mr. Salagean had been baptized! I was overjoyed because I knew that Mihai would be able to grow up in a Christian home and once they returned to Romania they would continue to learn by studying with our missionary in their hometown.

This brings me to my third and final assignment: Encouragement! In Hebrews 3:13, the writer says to "encourage one another daily." Encouragement can mean lots of different things. It can be a shoulder to lean on, a warm hug, a hand to hold, or an understanding smile. Whatever form encouragement takes, it sends the same message: "You are important to me and I care enough to tell you so."

When I think about Mihai's family, it makes me feel good inside. His family encouraged my congregation so much because of their trust in us and in God. They were willing to leave their home and come here, not knowing anyone or any of our customs. It gave our congregation much encouragement to see them trust the doctors who operated on Mihai. It is also good to know that, since the Salageans are back in Romania, Mr. Salagean can encourage the small congregation there.

Mihai's surgery went very well, a prothesis was donated and he is now back in Romania playing and laughing with all the other children.

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In years to come, Mihai may not remember his trip to the States, his surgery, or all of the people, like me, whose life he changed. But his parents will remember and he will be told by them. Our congregation will remember how a two-year-old encouraged, helped, and taught our congregation so much. I know I will never forget Mihai's last words of "good-bye" and "thank you."

In conclusion, I would like to leave you with something that Mr. Salagean said. He was asked, "Since the fall of communism in 1989, what is the freedom that you enjoy most?" He answered, "Knowing that my family can go to church without the fear of being harmed or arrested."

3rd Grade

Christ's Mission and Mine

By Matthew Rees

EVEN AS A THIRD GRADER, I have a mission just like Christ had a mission. But before I can know what my mission is I must first look at my example, Jesus Christ. His mission was not to be rich. His mission was not to be famous. His mission was simply to be about His Father's business.

What was His Father's business? We can find out by looking in Matthew 9:12-13. Jesus said, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means, I desire compassion and not sacrifice for I did not call the righteous but sinners." Also, in Matthew 18:11, Jesus says, "For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost." The most important goal in Christ's mission was to teach the gospel to all men, women, and children. He chose 12 men to begin the task.

Next, in Acts 10:38, we read about another important part of Christ's mission which was doing good to all men. In this verse, we find Peter preaching to the Gentiles the good news of Jesus Christ. Peter said, "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with Power, and how He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him."

A third quality of Christ's mission while on earth was to be a servant to all men. In Matthew 26:26-28, Jesus said, "It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be

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your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

This was Christ's mission. Let me tell you what MY mission is and how I can be about my Father's business even as a third grader.

First of all, I can attend Church, Bible Class and study my Bible daily so that one day I can be baptized. I can invite my friends to church to give them the opportunity to learn about God just as Christ did for so many. Next, I can be kind to my friends, and even my enemies, forgiving them as Christ forgave others. Most of all, I can be the best example I can possibly be in my daily life. Finally, I can be a servant, both at school and at home, just as Christ was for so many; waiting not to be served but always willing to serve WITHOUT being asked.

In conclusion, I would like to share the following poem with you titled, "The Lord Has A Job For Me."

The Lord had a job for me one day,
But I had so much to do;
I said, "Lord, you can get somebody else
Or wait till I get through."
I don't know how the Lord came out,
No doubt He got along;
But I felt kind of sneaking like,
I knew I'd done wrong.
One day I needed the Lord,
Needed Him right away;
But He wouldn't answer me at all,
And I could hear Him say
Way down in my accusing heart;
"Child, I've got so much to do,
You get somebody else
Or wait till I get through."
Now when the Lord has a job for me,
I never try to shirk;
I leave what I have on hand,
And do the Lord's good work.
And my affairs can run along
Or wait till I get through,
For not one else can do the work
God has marked for you.
—Author Unknown

Remember, no matter what age you are, Christ has a mission for you.

3rd Grade

I Must be About My Father's Business: Lessons From A Young Man Named Joseph

By Michael Mabe

IN THE DAYS OF THE PHARAOHS of Egypt, eleven jealous and angry men sold their youngest brother into slavery because they thought their father loved their youngest brother the best. Of course, this is the story of Joseph in the Old Testament.

In Genesis, we read about what happened to Joseph and how his life was changed because of this one act of unkindness by his brothers. We can all agree that Joseph has every right to be angry and full of hatred for his family because of what they did to him.

Later we read that Joseph grew up and became a very powerful man in Egypt—still separated from his family. And, when the famine struck the land, Joseph's brothers travelled to Egypt to get grain. When Joseph recognized them, he could have continued to hate them and sent them away empty-handed. But instead, he loved them, and spoke these words to them in Genesis 45:4-8, "Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'Come close to me.' When they had done so, he said, 'I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be ploughing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.'"

We can clearly see that Joseph understood and accepted his mission on earth. Just like Joseph, many years later, Jesus also came to earth. Surely He must have asked His Father, "Why do I need to leave heaven and go to earth to help all those sinful people?"

But we know Jesus listened to His Father and did come to earth for one main reason: To show us what God was like and to save us from our sin. In John 5:30, Jesus says "By myself I can do nothing. I judge only as I hear and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself, but Him who sent me."

So in coming to earth, Jesus had a mission, to please His Father in everything He did. Likewise, we should always try to please our Father with the lives we live.

As a young man today, I know that there are things that I must do to be about my father's business:

1. I know I must read and study my Bible. In 2 Timothy 2:15, I read that I must "study to show [my]self approved unto God."
2. I must serve others and let them see that God lives in me.
3. I must be in fellowship with other Christian people and participate in activities that are good and pure.
4. I must obey God's word and live my life just like Christ did.

I know that my mission on earth is very much like that of Joseph and Jesus, I need to help others find out how to live for Christ and be saved.

9th Grade

Mission Control

By Monica Newberry

A HUGE CROWD GATHERED before the first rays of light peaked over the horizon. We had waited in the pre-dawn hours for what seemed like an eternity. Suddenly, the ground began to rumble and shake, and a brilliant flash of light illuminated up the morning sky. We stood frozen with mouths open in amazement. Then came a reassuring voice which filled the airways with the resonating message: "This is mission control and we have a lift off." Spontaneous applause broke out and we cheered the shuttle as it climbed higher, and higher and struggled to break free of gravity's grip.

Mission control, the heartbeat of information, is the master control center which assures success. Without it the mission would fail. But when the ones on the mission and mission control work together, the results are spectacular. Without a doubt, manned flight has changed the future and the course of history.

Over 2,000 years ago, another mission was launched, designed to change the future and the course of history. From mission control God made the decision to begin the ultimate mission—to reveal Himself to mankind through His son Jesus. The mission of God involved planning, action and follow through. This mission had been planned from the very beginning of time, because God loves us. I think John 3:16 sums it all up: "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

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Astronauts carefully train to fully understand their mission, but Jesus knew at the early age of 12 that He had a special purpose when He told His parents in the temple that He had to be about His Father's business. Even at this young age, Scripture tells us He grew in wisdom, stature, and in favor with God and man. He later said He came to seek and save the lost. That was quite an ambitious mission, wasn't it?

When President Kennedy made the announcement that we would devote our efforts to conquer space, we had just suffered the embarrassment of being outwitted by Russians who were the first to place a man in space. He united the resolve of our country to be first to put a man on the moon and bring him safely home again before the end of the decade. Many thought that this was an *insane* mission. In fact, there are some today who would vow that the events of July 20, 1969 never occurred. They allege that it was all a staged media event somewhere out in the desert. Yet, many saw and heard and believed when they heard Neil Armstrong announce, "The Eagle has landed." The fact that some do not believe it does not change the fact that an American flag is still planted on the surface of the moon.

Some also deny that Jesus was God's son. They argue that the man Jesus was just that, a man—a significant figure in history with a nice set of teachings—but only a man. Those who doubt or refuse to believe do not change the impact of God's mission: the miraculous birth, the humiliating death, the victorious resurrection, and the exhilarating ascension of Jesus. The miracles of Jesus and the testimony of witnesses are evidences of an accomplished mission. The faith and hope that lives in the hearts of disciples is a continual living testimony of the scope of His mission.

The fact that Jesus came to earth is more than just an historical event. The fulfillment of a long-ago promise to make a plan of salvation so all men can come to know God distinguishes this as the greatest of all missions.

Space technology has impacted our world in many positive ways. Our lives have been enriched by the many innovations developed through the space program. Many missions will be launched in the future and exciting discoveries remain on the horizon. But the space program pales in comparison to Christ and His Mission. We send man into the heavens; heaven sent Jesus to earth.

The power and majesty of each space shuttle lift-off is impressive. It takes planning, action and follow through. It still gives us chills and boggles our minds, doesn't it? But are you equally awed by Christ's mission? Do we sometimes fail to take Christ and His mission seriously? It took planning, action and follow through, too. How much of an impact did Christ's coming make on your life personally? What difference has His mission had on your life? Have you chosen to ignore the reality of a future in eternity?

Just as certain as He came once, He is coming again. Let's make it our mission to be ready for that second coming. You may not ever have the opportunity to be an astronaut, fly in space, or travel to the moon, but you do have an opportunity to fly away with Jesus to a heavenly city.

If I were to sum up His mission, I would put it this way: the son of God became a man so that men could become sons of God. That was His mission. The incredible truth is His mission continues in the lives of those willing to believe in Him and obey Him. You already have the flight manual, the Bible. It will take planning, action and follow through. Have you accepted your assignment and begun your training for eternity?

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Brotherhood News

REIDSVILLE, NC...The Sunnycrest congregation reports that Gary G. Payne, their minister, has been commissioned as an officer in the Army Reserve into the Chaplain Corps as a First Lieutenant. CHARLOTTE, NC...PROVIDENCE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, meeting in the facilities of the Providence Rd. church, announces that Michael R. Mobley, ministrer for the Mooresville church, has been appointed the school's new administrator. He assumed his duties on March 8. CENTRAL PIEDMONT COMMUNITY COLLEGE, announces the appointment of Dr. Tony Zeiss as their new president. Dr. Zeiss is a member of the Providence Rd. church. STATESVILLE, NC...The NORTHVIEW CHURCH announces the return of Jimmy Hampton from Nashville, TN as the featured speaker for their 1993 Youth Rally coming August 5—7. SANFORD, NC...The church in Sanford announces that they will be hosting the first statewide Annual Bible Bowl, August 28. The book to study for the event is Luke. For more details telephone (919)774-8502, or write PO Box 3731, Sanford, NC 27330. MONROE, NC...The Walkup Ave. church announces a Gospel Meeting with Craig Henricks of Winnsboro, SC September 12—16. CARY, NC...The church announces their 1993 Ladies Day, November 6. The theme this year will be "The Good Ole Days." GREENSBORO, NC...AGAPE OF NC, Tom Slaughter, Executive Director, reports that AGAPE's restructuring over the past year and a half has encabled them to handle twice the number of clients using the regional approach while producing an annual savings of $20,000 at the same time! However, due to social changes throughout the nation, some of their income is down this year creating a shortage of over $30,000. AGAPE is asking for our prayers and any financial aid that can be offered. CHESTER, SC...The church in Chester announces a GOSPEL MEETING, July 18-24, with Wellington Smith, minister for the Walkup Ave. church in Monroe. MANNING, SC...The church announces a Campaign for Christ to be conducted September 10—17. FRANKLIN, TN...WORLD RADIO BROADCASTING, Station KLNS, announces its 10th Anniversary. To celebrate, they are asking that we participate in a drive to continue broadcasting to the millions upon millions of lost people in Russia and the People's Republic of China. They are asking that our area of the country provide $100,000 by August 31. For more information contact: Dr. Robert E. Scott, KLNS, Operations Center, PO Box 681706, Franklin, TN 37068 1706. NASHVILLE, TN...CAMPAIGN AMERICA, under the oversight of the Hillsboro church, announces that 50,000 calls have been generated in its second year of production. Anyone interested in bringing this program to his area should telephone (615) 665-2USA, or write CAMPAIGN AMERICA, PO Box 150309, Nashville, TN 37215.

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

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Frank Eidson
1933—1993

Editorial

By Johnny R. Melton

THE *NEWSWEEK* COVER shows two attractive women embracing. The headline is simply "Lesbians." The subheads reveal the article's thrust: "Coming Out Strong" and "What are the limits of tolerance?". The emphasis is on "Coming Out Strong."

"The Far Side" cartoon depicts two scientists at a blackboard. One is calculating and saying to the other, "Yes, yes, I *know* that Sydney... *every*body knows *that*!...But look: Four wrongs squared, minus two wrongs to the fourth power, divided by this formula, *do* make a right."

In the name of tolerance, political correctness, or whatever euphemism is in vogue, the pundits are engaged in the mental gymnastics of calling evil good and good evil.

This is what happens when everyone does what is right in their own eyes. In 1991 the President of Yale University welcomed in-coming freshmen by saying, in part, "The faculty can guide you. We can take you to the frontiers of knowledge, but we cannot supply you with a philosophy of life. This must come from your own active learning, from your own decisions. Yale expects you to take yourself seriously. Think for yourself."

We are told to think for ourselves, meaning that every man and woman, boy and girl should become a law unto themselves and do whatever "feels" right. Moral relativism is winning the day. To illustrate what happens when biblical morality is abandoned and each individual pursues whatever feels right consider the case of Woody Allen. The break-up of his long-term affair with Mia Farrow has been big news. They broke up because of his affair with her adopted daughter. Asked about the affair by ***Time*** magazine, Mr. Allen explained that he was in love with the girl. He implied that, because he loved her, sexual intimacy was inevitable. After all, he explained, "The heart wants what the heart wants."

Paul's warning to the Colossians has never been any more appropriate: "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and basic principles of this world rather than on Christ" (Col. 2:8).

William Willimon, in a sermon delivered at Duke Chapel, reported some disheartening information which reveals some of the consequences of thinking for ourselves and depending on "human tradition and basic principles of

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this world." Willimon's source is the book **The Day America Told the Truth**. Consider the following: 91% of Americans admit to lying routinely; 31% of us who are married admit to having an extramarital affair lasting longer than a year; 86% of youth lie regularly to their parents, and 75% lie regularly to their best friends; 20% lose their virginity before the age of 13; in 1991 2,245 New Yorkers were murdered by fellow citizens, an increase of 18%. Two-thirds of those asked about religion said it plays no role in shaping their opinions about sex.

Oscar Wilde once observed, "About the worst advice you could give anybody is 'be yourself.'" Rather than thinking for ourselves, and doing whatever our hearts want because our hearts want it, Christians govern our lives by Scripture. Two wrongs *still* don't make a right.

Southern Christian University

The Carolina Extension of Southern Christian University will offer both undergraduate and graduate courses this fall. The classes will meet at the Providence Road church's facility in Charlotte, NC. The following courses are slated to be taught: Introduction to Psychology and Ministry I (graduate) and Minister and His Work and Introduction to the New Testament (undergraduate). Registration for the Fall Quarter is scheduled for September 10 in Montgomery, AL. Classes in Charlotte will begin September 20. For more information contact Dr. Terry Gunnells at SCU, 1-800-351-4040.

Questions and Answers

In this issue of **Carolina Christian** we begin a "Questions and Answers" column. Stan Helton responds to a question regarding the meaning of Paul's phrase, "husband of one wife." This column will appear as questions are submitted by our readers. Stan is well qualified to deal with questions that have to do with the Greek language. While Stan will be primarily responsible for this column, he will not be the only one to respond to questions. We will attempt to have questions answered by someone, who by virtue of training and experience, can make the best response. By answering questions in the pages of **Carolina Christian** no attempt is being made to establish orthodoxy for the brotherhood. Those who answer questions will do so carefully, providing their best insight and judgment, but understanding that they speak only for themselves. Our readers are urged to read these columns as an aid to their own study of questions raised.

Associate Editorial

We Serve a Powerful—and Patient—God

By Jim Mullican

PAUL WRITES IN ROMANS 8:28 that "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, and are called according to his purpose."

Peter also writes in 2 Peter 3:9 that "the Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

Paul also wrote in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

The truth and reliability of these Scriptures was brought home in an incident which occurred ten years ago, but which had been developing for more than twenty years prior to that as the Lord and some of his servants patiently used the gospel to melt a stubborn heart.

More than thirty years ago, a teenager was invited by a friend to visit a church of Christ. He accepted, heard the gospel, and became a Christian. His father was a strong-willed man who was a member of a well-known denomination. The boy was thrown out of his home, but a Christian family took him in. He finished high school, then attended a Christian college, married a Christian girl, and later became a missionary in South America.

His father, a widower, married a kind and gentle lady. Her influence and the Christian example of his son gradually brought about a reconciliation. When home on visits, the son would try to teach his father, but with little success. Then the older man developed multiple sclerosis, and began to realize what really matters in life.

So it was that one night in the summer of 1983, as a few workers were still cleaning up after a night of VBS classes, the telephone rang. The caller identified himself as the missionary already mentioned and said his father wanted to be baptized into Christ. Due to the multiple sclerosis, he and I together baptized his father, and a few weeks later, the stepmother also became a Christian. About three years later, that once proud and stubborn man went to meet his God, saved by grace through faith in Jesus. God had patiently used the gospel, his son, his wife, his grandchildren, and his illness to bring him to repentance.

For every Christian wife with a non-Christian husband, for every Christian parent with unfaithful children, for every disciple with a friend or relative who needs the salvation Jesus offers—do not give up. The Scriptures tell us that God wants all to be saved, and that He wants to use us to bring others into His kingdom. It may take a long time, but God is patient and persistent. We must be also.

Editor's Note: The following essay was written by Mary Hill, an eighth grader, about her Granddad, Frank Eidson. Frank was a longtime member of the Abilene church in Statesville, NC. He began working for Rex Beaver at Beaver's Country Store 42 years ago. At his death he and his family ran the store. Frank lost the battle with cancer, but won the victory of faith, and went to be with the Lord on May 25, 1993. Following Mary's essay are two notes from members of the Cool Springs community which are representative of the respect and esteem in which Frank was held.

My Granddad

By Mary Hill

IT WAS A WARM SUNDAY MORNING. Everything was quiet except for the birds singing. Everyone was up around eight o'clock. We got dressed for church and after awhile we left. No one even considered that something could possibly go wrong.

We got to church, and I noticed something very much out of place: I noticed my **Granddad** was missing. We still had ten minutes left before church was supposed to start, but he was usually the first one there. I heard someone say that he had the flu. That is pretty odd because my Granddad hardly ever gets sick. Anyway, I didn't think much about it afterwards.

My Granddad is a very kind-hearted, generous, and loving man. Anyone who knows him probably understands what I mean. He would do anything for the family, or anyone else for that matter. He means a great deal to our family and to most of the community.

I can't recall how long it was after that, but my Granddad had to go to the hospital and have some tests done because he wasn't getting any better. After some time he got the news. He has liver cancer. Everyone was really sad and couldn't believe the news. Since that time he hasn't been his old self. For awhile after that he came to church when he could, now he is not able to come or hardly even get out of the house much. He has not been able to talk a lot because he is always so tired. He has his good days and bad days; mostly bad, though. The doctors finally decided to put him on chemotherapy.

He was in so much pain that they had to do something. He said that he felt better after his first week of chemo. I was so glad to see him doing a little better.

Just about every Sunday we go up to their house to eat lunch. One Sunday we had a picnic, and he was able to lay in a yard chair. We were fixing to eat, and my Granddad said that he would like to say a few words. He told all the family that he loved them and then said some other things. After that he started to cry. Some of my aunts started crying, too. It hurt me to see him the way he was. I started crying, and then I went inside. My uncle came in and gave me a great big hug and told me that he loved me. I never realized how great my family is. I have taken them and my Granddad for granted so many times. I never realized how fortunate I am to have them. I love them all very much and I hope they know that.

My Granddad has been in the hospital for about a week now. His pain was bad again, so he had to get some medicine that would be stable for him. He was supposed to come home Saturday, but today is Sunday and he's still not home. They are not exactly sure when he will come home. Sometimes when we go to the hospital his room is so crowded that there is no extra for anyone else. The doctor saw all of the family at the hospital today and said that my Granddad was lucky to have a family like us. I think that we are lucky to have a man like him in our family.

Sometimes it gets hard trying to deal with what might happen next. I try not to let it get me down and just hope for the best. It works sometimes, and other times it doesn't.

He is trying really hard to fight this thing. (By thing I mean cancer.) I know he will never go back to being the same man I know, but he's my Granddad. I will accept him any way I can have him.

(Mary's teacher wrote the following comments on her essay: "Beautifully written. What a ***beautiful, unselfish,*** *loving legacy your grandfather has given to his children and grandchildren. Dedicate this paper to his honor and love. Mary, please let your family read this. By writing this paper, you have given God's meaning purpose, and fulfillment to your grandfather.")*

Notes from Friends

"Frank, this is a short, not so adequate attempt to relate what you mean to me. First, I look forward to visiting the Store because you have made it a place, not only to buy something, but to be greeted as a true friend. I know that while I was unemployed, you would have given me credit for my family's needs if I had been down and out. You would have! I have memories of the times you have always saved me money: you tried to repair things, saved me time and effort and money always. You are indeed a giving person; and our community is better because of you. I don't really mean to put a stress on money. Money is nothing. What means most in life is reputation and most of all our families and friends. You have done a lot right in life, because it is reflected in your daughters, sons-in-law, and grandchildren.

"Frank, you are a man whom I highly respect and admire. You have a God-fearing aura about you that radiates to everyone about you. I am truly fortunate to have a friend like you."

"Just a little over sixteen years ago I first came to the world famous **Beaver's Store**. I was a little smaller, little younger, with more hair then. It took me only a few trips to see what made it so famous. It was the people there. I would like to thank you for your loyalty and

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friendship for all these years. Always kind words with a smile. In the last few years I have seen more to make it special, your girls. What a joy to speak with them. I see where your happiness comes from—what a family. The in-laws I have met are ok also. Please know that I think of you daily and pray every day you will be back at work and be the Frank I have come to know, love, and care for."

Real Values

At Frank's funeral, Wallace Beasley read excerpts from notes and letters written by Frank's children, grandchildren, brethren, customers, and friends. He was well-loved and he will be sorely missed by the Abilene church and the Cool Springs community. The news is filled with gloom and despair. The economy is going haywire, the country's moral fiber is unraveling, families are falling apart, confidence in the future is at an all time low. In his death, Frank Eidson, causes some of us to reflect on the truly important things in life: personal commitment to God, devotion to family, dedication to the church, integrity in business, and kindness to all.

Homosexuality: Modern Society and the Ancient Text (Part Four)

By Tim Sensing

WHAT SHOULD BE OUR RESPONSE as the people of God? First, we must overcome the sin of homophobia. Homophobia is fed by the following myths. (1) Homosexuals seek out young boys in order to seduce them. Evidence demonstrates that the percentage of homosexual attacks is no greater than in the heterosexual population. (2) Homosexuals have feminine qualities. However, there are some macho men who are homosexuals and many soft men who are heterosexual. (3) All homosexuals have AIDS. Today, AIDS is spreading faster in the heterosexual community. (4) AIDS is God's curse on homosexuality. Many will cite Rom. 1 for textual support. However, many with AIDS are not homosexuals. Many homosexuals do not have AIDS. AIDS is the result of sin. Sin, like any other sickness, is rooted in Gen. 3. AIDS and other STD's are often immediate consequences to immoral behavior; however, to associate AIDS with God zapping sinners is contrary to the nature of God.

Homophobia is defined as: the revulsion toward homosexuals and the desire to inflict punishment as retribution. The concept is employed in the gay lib rhetoric to label as neurotic anyone who disagrees with or expresses emotional repugnance to homosexual behavior. There may be true homophobia—i.e., a neurotic fear of association with homosexual persons. However, such a state is clinically very rare. It is a misuse of labels to suggest that a disagreement on social values is a phobia. More important is the fact that sexual taboos do carry a negative emotional tone. One does experience an emotional revulsion at the idea of sexual relations with one's parents or children. Likewise, there is a normal emotional revulsion experience by heterosexuals to the idea of engaging in homosexual relations. The concept of homophobia has been widely misunderstood, employed as political rhetoric, and incorrectly defined.

Our response should be acceptance: With the rise of AIDS, many homosexuals are more receptive to change than ever before. Let's not just shut the door on them. Be prepared to be God's instrument to help a homosexual. To answer our original question again: Should we view homosexuality differently today? That depends on your own past prejudices. If you have viewed homosexuals with contempt, then yes, you need to change your perspective.

Treatment

Experts disagree concerning various methods of treatment. The gay lib movement has argued that treatment of the homosexual should be geared toward affirmation of homosexual orientation, acceptance of homosexual identity, and engagement in a gay life style. Others have advocated adaptive treatment which neither approves nor disapproves of homosexuality but seeks to help the homosexual person adopt a life style that minimizes personal and social conflicts.

A third perspective concerns changing the sexual orientation of the homosexual. Methods to change gender orientation are numerous. However, on the whole, none are remarkably successful. The criterion for a cure is "a reversal of psychological responsiveness from a predominantly homosexual to a primarily heterosexual one. Thus a 'cured' homosexual would not only disengage from homosexual activity but he/she would also disengage emotionally to a large extent from homosexual fantasies, dreams, and physical arousal by sight or touch" (Saghir, p. 319).

Once you have decided to become actively involved in ministering to a homosexual, first determine their attitude. The person must first want to change. No one can force a cure on anyone; and even with complete cooperation, homosexual orientation is very hard to change. Overcoming sinful passion is a life-long struggle. Only God through Christ will give them strength to overcome.

You should be empathic with the person's struggles. Do not categorically say homosexual people need help from a mental health professional—they may or may not. Sometimes by sending a person to a therapist we are saying, "Go off and get well; when you're better, come back." The person needs the support of the church in either case.

Establish what the scriptures teach. Fight a spiritual war with spiritual weapons. There must be a foundation on which you can build. To merely say to a person that "this is not normal or good for you and your mother does not like it," is not enough. Let the person read for himself what the scriptures say. Let the Word convict. It will, if the person has an open heart and desires to change. You do not need to preach or push.

Develop a Christ-like attitude within yourself. Like the homosexual, I too am a sinner. Homosexuality is just one sin and God has not put it at the top of any list. It is not any worse than greed. It's important that the homosexual not see me as keeping him at arm's length and saying (in attitude if not verbally), "You're dirty," or "How could anyone do this?" or "Just don't touch me." It's okay to put your arm around a man or woman struggling with homosexuality. Let them know that you care for them. Your touch will often communicate more than your words.

How does one change? Allow time for growth. A person must not be rushed. Remember, there are many who struggle with various sins in our pews. Direction is more important than progress. First, there must be a change of heart. Transformation only comes by the power of God. Confess your orientation (James 5:16). Faith, repentance, baptism are all apart of a true response to the Lordship of Jesus.

Next, there must follow a change of action. The homosexual must substitute old thoughts and old activities with new thoughts and new activities. Break away from all tempting ties to the old behavior. This includes clothes which are designed to attract a sex partner. You will need to break past friendships. Old friends will tempt you back to an old lifestyle. Sometimes, you will need to physically change where you live because of the strong pull of past relationships.

Finally, you will need to change direction. The source of our strength is in the Lord. Fellowship, prayer, study and continued obedience will be necessary for one to remain in God's will. An active support group needs to be in place as an important element contributing to change. A number of religious self-help organizations have arisen in the past several years to aid people who desire support in leaving the homosexual lifestyle.

Prevention

For those who are not homosexuals—don't become curious. Allow your sexual curiosity to be fulfilled in God ordained ways. Trust your Maker to know how to best handle the precious gift of sex he has given you. Don't experiment. Sin is both deceiving and enslaving. Don't play with fire—You will get burned.

G.A. Rekers offers this prevention advice to parents: "From a theological perspective the available scientific data and theories and Scriptures (e.g., Prov. 22:6) place a moral responsibility upon fathers and mothers (Eph. 6:1-4; Titus 2:3-5) to teach their children the essential sex-role distinctions and thus assist their normal gender identity development.... It is a parental responsibility to teach these sex-role distinctions to sons and daughters" (448).

Encourage strong family relationships. In particular, encourage close, warm relationships between the father and children of both sexes. Encourage mothers to be warm and supportive but not to the degree that they find their only source of self-esteem in their children. The parents should openly express affection for each other affirming and demonstrating the goodness of the male-female polarity.

Parents should supervise their children's play to discourage potentially traumatic homosexual or heterosexual exploration or exploitation. However, if such behavior occurs, parents should not react punitively or induce guilt, but should provide for satisfying sexual curiosity in more appropriate ways.

In the general teaching program of the church, emphasize the unacceptability of homosexual behavior as an option and lifestyle. This will lend support to a heterosexual orientation. Remain loving and accepting of persons regardless of their situation in life. This will make it possible for the one struggling with homosexual conflicts to seek you for counsel.

This does not mean that you have to start heterosexual behavior and get married. There are documented cases of successful reorientation, but this is not necessary. What is necessary: Stopping the behavior; Being forgiven. Is it really possible for homosexuals to change? The possibility of achieving long-term sexual orientation change may not be optimistic. Some reports indicate that some orientation change is possible and that many more such persons demonstrate lifestyle changes. We know that one does not have to do what he or she feels like doing. We must all look at the consequences of our actions before proceeding to act. Homosexual orientation may not change, yet the homosexual lifestyle must change for one to be a faithful Christian.

There is hope for the homosexual: Believe there is hope for a brighter future. Paul states that some at Corinth had engaged in homosexual acts, but they had been washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and in the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9-11). The same can happen today. As with anyone who repents of a sin, the homosexual can be forgiven. They can experience the same freedom and joy that any other sinner knows when they become Christians. The Bible condemns homosexual sex but clearly states that homosexuals can be saved.

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[Tim serves the Mebane Street church in Burlington, NC. Contact him at PO Box 1861, Burlington, NC 27216-1861.]

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Editor's Note: In the June issue of **Carolina Christian** *we featured the Lads to Leaders/Leaderettes program from the Friendly Avenue church in Greensboro, NC. Young people in the program submitted the text of the speeches they delivered at the National Lads to Leaders/ Leaderettes Convention held in Nashville, Tennessee this Spring. There was more material submitted than could be used in one issue, so we are including the remaning articles this month. All of the speeches addressed the theme: "Christ and His Mission: I Must Be about My Father's Business."*

6th Grade

Our Role as Supporting Actors

By Jill Galloway

What can I give Him
Child that I am?
If I were a shepherd
I'd bring Him a lamb;
If I were a wise man
I would do my part.
Yet, what can I give Him
I can give Him my heart.
—Author Unknown

WE CAN GIVE JESUS OUR HEART without fear, because as a child of God we have a guarantee of being loved in return. We must abide in Jesus' love just as Jesus abided in His father's love (John 15:9). We have a promise of unconditional eternal love which will bring us salvation. "We love because he first loved us," (1 John 4:19).

How do I know Jesus loves me? Because the Bible tells me so. Because from the beginning of time Jesus was preparing for a mission. What kind of mission was He preparing for? It was a very special mission; it could be called a mission of love. You may ask: "What's so special about this mission?" Well, it was planned and directed by the most supreme power of the universe: The Lord our God.

It's as if God decided to put on a grand play. One of love, hope and salvation. God needed only one star, one great performer to get His message to the audience. This superstar was Jesus. God was the director, stage manager, and special effects coordinator rolled into one. Jesus was the headlining actor who put on the show. Just like a director has specific goals, God did too. The Bible states in John 14:10 that God gave Jesus a plan with a purpose and with objectives so God's work could be done. With this in mind God sent Jesus to earth (John 8:42).

Jesus' mission or purpose was not like a military mission which has as its main goal to destroy and conquer. Jesus' main goal was to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). How did Jesus accomplish this mission of seeking and saving the lost? He started by teaching us about God and the salvation which awaits His faithful servants. Jesus taught through His example, His miracles, and His love for us.

You may ask: "Why? Why did God send Jesus on this mission?" God did this because of His awesome love. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

If you are a Christian, this mission has special meaning in your heart. But, how can we fulfill our own purpose as a Christian just as Christ fulfilled His mission? The answer is easy! The answer is stated in John 15:10, "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept my fathers and abide in His love."

Since we are instructed to follow God's commandments, we may want to know what the greatest commandment is. The answer is found in Matthew 22:37. This verse says: "You shall

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love the Lord your God with all your Heart, with all your soul and with all your mind."

In conclusion, we should accept our responsibility of love just as Jesus accepted His superstar role in God's grand play. We can be Jesus' best supporting actors in any mission in which we decide to take part.

But, what is our part? What can we give God? The answer is in the poem I read earlier: We can give Him our heart. If we give our heart to God, our love can make any mission a success. Along with God we can put on a show of celestial proportion starring Love, Hope and Salvation. And this show will bring down the house in any theater of life.

10th Grade

Things of Value

By Juliana Galloway

THINGS OF REAL VALUE cannot be priced in dollars, for they are priceless. The Bible teaches that the soul of man is the greatest of values, more than all the world. When I think about Christ and His mission, I realize that Jesus paid the greatest possible price for the salvation of our souls. He was hated, mocked, beaten, and finally crucified to give us salvation. Could anything be of more value to us? I believe Jesus had a mission to help teach man the importance of setting goals based on things of real value.

Good character is priceless. Without it we suffer in life. Kindness, gentleness, courtesy, gratitude, and charity are essential in building and maintaining good character and reputation. These are qualities that every Christian should strive to have in their life. The story of Jesus, Martha and Mary is an example of life's true value. One day Jesus came to Bethany. Martha received Him into her home and was preparing a meal for Him, but her sister Mary was not helping her. Mary sat at Jesus' feet listening to His words. Martha was full of anxiety and frustration over serving the meal. I can see her in my mind, standing over a hot stove, wiping the perspiration from her forehead.

Martha was upset because Mary did not help her. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, dost thou care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me." "Martha, Martha," (Can't you hear Him saying this in a calm, kind, but accusing voice?) "thou art careful and troubled about many things, but Mary has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Some young women do understand the

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Bernard Cooper, Sr. was born December 12, 1954. He is a native of Edgecombe County North Carolina. He and his wife Gwendolyn were married July 14, 1973 and have one son Bernard, Jr. Bernard graduated Saratoga Central High School in 1974 and went to work for Firestone Tire and Rubber Co. in 1975. He worked for Firestone until he entered Florida School of Preaching in 1991 to prepare for full-time ministry. He completed his studies in May 1993. Brother Cooper taught Bible classes and preached on a fill-in basis for the church in Wilson, NC prior to enrolling in the school of preaching. The Coopers are interested in returning to the Carolinas to preach the Gospel. Any church interested in his services should contact him at the address given above. References include: Maurice Davis, Minister, Sixth Street Church of Christ, Lakeland, FL (813) 682-8695; Kenneth W. Franklin, Bell Shoals Church of Christ, Brandon, FL (813) 681-4385; B. C. Carr, Former Director, Florida School of Preaching, Lakeland, FL (813) 683-4043; Billy R. Davidson, Minister, Central Church of Christ, Clearwater, FL (813) 446-4808.

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true value of life as seen in the following story that was written by a sixteen-year-old high school junior as part of her final examination in English. (This girl was one of three members of the church in a school of 400)

The Thing That Matters Most

"The thing that matters most to me is spending eternal life in heaven. In my early life, I obeyed the gospel. I went to church regularly. I heard the word of God, believed it, repented of my sins, confessed Christ as my savior, and was baptized for the remission of my sins. The Lord added me to His church. Since then I have tried to live the Christian life just as Christ would have me to do. I want to be a good example for others, for I believe that is one of the main things that I can do that will help bring others to Christ.

"I don't think that young people realize how important it is to live a Christian life. They are interested in the pleasures of life and can't overcome temptation. The Bible says that only a few will enter the gates of heaven, and that the broad way leads to destruction. It will be wonderful to be with the few and spend eternity with Christ. I shall strive hard to do that. I beg God's help and the prayers of the saints on my behalf."

Now observe another story. A young girl in her early teens became hungry for spiritual food. She realized the need for spiritual food or for something deeper than light pleasures, so she talked with her mother about it. But her mother had a different view of the matter. She had dreamed of her daughter's success in the social circles, so she discouraged her seeking for spiritual things and encouraged her indulgence in society by giving her a large sum of money to buy an evening gown to wear to a dance.

The daughter had respect for her mother's wishes, so she bought the fine dress and attended the dance. She forgot her craving for spiritual food and became engaged in sinful pleasures more and more.

Time went on, and she soon became very ill. She realized she was going to die. She had her mother bring her the new dress she had bought. The mother, eager to answer her dying request, took the dress and spread it on the bed. "Look, Mother," she said, "that dress is the price of my soul."

The value of a righteous life is greater than all earthly pleasures, "For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26).

If a man should gain all the riches, honor, and pleasure in this world but in doing so should lose his soul, he has lost everything. But the one who saves his soul has the greatest profit there is—eternal life.

Reflecting upon the examples I have shared with you, one can see that the goals we set in life need to be based upon things of real value. We can be a successful part of Christ's mission by striving to set worthy goals and living a life of faith in God.

In closing, I would like to leave you with a poem entitled "Our Goal" from **Grandmother's Heritage.**

Our Goal
We plan and plan, but something intervenes.
And all our plans come tumbling down,
Like some bright summer dream.
We strive, we toil, we fight to conquer foes
We struggle on to reach our goal, and never see
The flowers that on the wayside grows.
Like Bunyan's man of straw, we rake and rake the chaff,
'Till perspiration blinds the eyes and strength is wining fast,
Too dull to hear the music that rings in a childish laugh,
Too deep absorbed to note another need;
We miss the wine of life, the friendly touch
Of man to man, and we are poor indeed.
Oh, hapless one too tired along life's way
To see the beauty of an evening sky;
Or feel the freshness of a new born day.
No time for an upward look, the best to find;
But plods along in the same old way,
'Till life is one long endless grind.
Come ye apart and rest awhile, O weary soul,
You brought nothing when you came in, and you'll take nothing out,
What then should be your goal?
It is something money cannot buy
It is noble thought, and kindly deeds
And a home in Heaven by and by.

6th Grade

The Beginning of a New Day

By Kim Rees

THIS IS THE BEGINNING of a new day. God has given me this day to use as I will. I can waste it or use it for good, but what I do today is important, because I am exchanging a day of my life for it! When tomorrow comes, this day will be gone forever, leaving in its place something that I have traded for it. I want it to be gain and not loss, good and not evil, success and not failure, in order that I shall not regret the price that I have paid for it.

In striving to be about our Father's business, the normal day of a Christian should consist of "L," "D," "H," and "F." "L" stands for LOVE. Love for God and others. "D" which stands for DETERMINATION. Determination to be pure and holy and to teach others the Word of God. As it says in Mark 16:15-16, "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every nation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." Next, the letter, "H" which stands for HOPE. Hope that he/she might lead a faithful life, be a good example to others, and one day spend eternity in Heaven with God. Finally, "F" which stands for FAITH. Faith in God and in oneself.

If that is the day of a Christian, then what is the day of a person who is not a Christian or who has wandered away from God? Possibly hatred, robbery, murder, rape, and the most popular, drinking and doing drugs. This is where Christ's mission begins in our lives.

There are three things you must do to complete your mission as a soldier for Christ. First, find those who need to hear the Word of God. Remember, they may not always come to you. Second, teach them, study with them, and stress to them how much they need to become a Christian, and how lost they are until they are a child of God. Tell them they are missing the best opportunity to truly know God. If you don't succeed, DON'T GIVE UP! Next, go to step number three, which is, continue the process.

There are those Christians who try to the best of their ability to be faithful in fulfilling their mission for Christ. But it seems that there are more of us who would rather take the easy way through our mission than the way God wants us to travel. Consider the lesson taught in the story of the chicken and the hog. A chicken and a hog were walking past a church building one day when they noticed the Sunday morning sermon posted on the outside bulletin board: "Helping the Poor." They walked a ways when the chicken suddenly came across with a suggestion. "Say, Brother Hog, why don't we give all of the poor people a nice breakfast of ham and eggs?" The hog thought a moment and replied, "That's all right for you to say because for you it is only a contribution; but for me, it's total commitment!"

There you have it—the letter "C" for COMMITMENT. Jesus succeeded in His mission because He was totally committed to the task before Him. He was willing to give up everything, even His life, for the cause He believed in. The Christian cannot really succeed in life until he reaches the point that he is willing to lay down his life. If you are going to be about your Father's business, you must be committed. How committed are you? As Christians, we need to take Christ's mission seriously. We need to take time to pray that we do not back away and act as if it does not matter, because it does!

So, if you ever think about giving up, let me challenge you with the following: Consider your mission as your battle for Christ. You are going to use your love, determination, hope, faith, and spiritual commitment as your weapons. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus says, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." You see, Christ will be with you!

In closing, remember, this is the beginning of a new day. Serve Christ faithfully, and you will succeed.

Christ's Mission and My Mission

By Mary Jean Seamon

CHRIST'S MISSION? My mission? Christ's mission? My mission? O.K. O.K. One at a time. What was Christ's mission? In Luke 2:49 Jesus told His mother that she should have known that He had to be about His Father's business. What was His Father's business? God created us and because we are His, He loves us so much that His business is to save each one of us and give us an eternal home with Him in heaven. Heaven. I can't imagine how wonderful it is there!!

Now my mission. What is my mission? I guess all Christians have the same mission which is to reflect the life of Jesus in their own life. Even though our mission is the same we have different assignments. We have these different assignments because we have different talents and because we are at different stages in our lives.

For instance, we have a man in our congregation whose creativity is almost unbelievable! One Saturday every summer we have what we call "Super Saturday," which is kind of like a weeks worth of VBS all rolled into one day. For the past two summers, Mr. Vic has fully planned and developed the theme for our Super Saturday. Although I may not have his talent for creativity, when he asked me (because of my size) to play the part of Zaccheus up in a tree I was more than willing to help.

Another example of using our different abilities to complete an assignment is in the area of teaching a class or visiting someone in the hospital. While I may not be able to do these things by myself, I can offer to baby-sit for mothers of small children so they can prepare for their class or go visiting.

If Christ's mission was to save the lost and my mission is to reflect Christ, then another assignment is to teach others. There are several ways of teaching, most of which I can do now. One of the best ways to teach someone is to be a daily example. That means I should always remember to be a Christian every day. If people learn by someone's example, then they learn by watching what others do and not necessarily what they say. I could sing, "Jesus Loves All the Little Children," but if I act as though I am better than someone else just because of the color of their skin, the neighborhood they live in, or the brand of their clothes, then my actions are speaking louder than my words.

Not only can I be an example, but I also look to others as examples. What kind of role models do I choose for myself? Is it someone who is loving and kind to everyone and is honestly striving to live as a Christian; or is it just someone who is popular?

Another way for me to work at my assignment of teaching others is to invite friends to come to my Bible classes and other church-related activities. They can see what a great time we have together and how much we mean to each other. This also provides an opportunity for them to see that we do things differently. For instance, having the Lord's Supper every Sunday and not having a piano or organ in our worship service. I know from experience that these differences are noticed, and I will be asked why we do things a certain way. Then I can go to the Bible and explain. Of course, before I can explain to someone else I have to understand it myself, which causes me to ask questions, study on my own and grow in my own understanding.

Has anyone ever really encouraged you? I'm sure they have. Maybe they sent you a note and told you what a great job you did on a project, a speech, or a bulletin board. Maybe someone came up to you and told you that they had faith in you and your ability to do a good job or make the right decision. Didn't that make you feel great and willing to put more effort into your work or your decision? I believe to be an encourager is one of our assignments. It doesn't take a lot of time or energy, just a short note, a quick word of praise or a friendly smile. It could make the difference in someone believing in themselves and trying again or giving up.

There are lots of other assignments which are closely related to opportunities such as hospitality, kindness to others, compassion, and being a good wife and mother and even grandmother. Most of our assignments are life-long (although our abilities will change), but some assignments have a time limit. For instance, I will always be my parents's daughter, but my assignments as their daughter will change as I continue to grow. A few years ago I didn't question my parents advice, I thought they knew almost everything. Now I am not so sure, so I do question them. Although I'm sure it is hard for them, they allow me some freedom to make some of my own decisions. Of course, they also allow me to face the consequences of those decisions. In the future, I will continue to love and respect my parents, but the time will come when I no longer have to answer to them.

Although God's plan is to give us an eternal home in Heaven, He doesn't want us to have to wait till judgment to have joy and happiness. Because He created us, He knows that living the Christian life right now is the happiest life possible.

As I grow and mature, I want to be aware of my assignments so I can complete my mission, which is reflecting Jesus in my life.

6th Grade

I Must Be About My Father's Business: Christ and His Mission

By Matthew Mabe

CHRIST CAME TO EARTH with a definite mission. He knew that His single life could change the entire direction of mankind. Man's life was full of sin and it *was God's plan to send Christ* to change that.

It would have been very easy for Christ to ask His Father, "How can *I*—as one person—make a difference?" This is a question that you and I might ask today. God answered Jesus by helping Him to understand His purpose in coming to earth. In Matthew 1:21 we read, "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

First, we can see from reading this Scripture that the mission of Jesus was clearly defined even before His birth—to save man from his sin. As a matter of fact, the prophet Isaiah reported in 7:14 that a virgin would give birth to a child and that His name would be called "Immanuel" which means, "God with us." So we can clearly see that God had defined Jesus' "mission" for Him and had shared that through men like Isaiah.

Secondly, in my mind, one particular mission of Christ was to win our hearts to Him. Let's read from Acts 17:24-28. "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples build by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though he is not far from each of us. For in Him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'" As we can clearly see from verse 27, God wanted men to seek after Him and realize that their very lives depended on Him.

Thirdly, I think we can easily see that Jesus came to teach man a better way of life. This goal

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was to give man a set of standards to live by. In John 10:10 Jesus says, "I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly."

Finally, I believe the mission of Christ was to transform our lives and save our souls. In Luke 19:9-10, Jesus states, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the son of man came to seek and save what was lost." We can see that He really wanted to save us from our sins.

As a Christian today, I also have a mission. My mission is to have the attitude of Christ as described in Philippians 2:5, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ, Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on the cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

Jesus accepted His fellowman just as he was, without prejudice, and taught him from that point. The woman at the well is a classic example. Jesus never missed and opportunity to share with others about God, His love and His forgiveness. Just like Christ we need to seize the opportunity and share God's message whenever and wherever we can. Jesus was never afraid to stand up for what He knew was right.

Today, as a young man, I need to prepare myself to be able to stand up to my peers and give them a ready answer for what I know is right and good. I need to cultivate Christ like qualities in my life such as humility, servanthood, kindness, gentleness, and unconditional love of others just to mention a few. My mission is to be all that I can be through the grace of God and be about my Father's business.

10th Grade

Young Men About Their Father's Business

By Patrick Rickelton

"SOLOMON REIGNED IN Jerusalem over all Israel forty years. Then he rested with his fathers and was buried in the city of David his father. And Rehoboam his son succeeded him as king."

First Kings 12 tells us that Rehoboam sought advice from two groups of men. The first was the elders who had served his father. They said, "If today you will be a servant of these people and serve them...they will always be your servants."

He then turned to the young men who had grown up with him. They did not understand the idea of serving others. Instead they advised him to think of himself and to enslave his people. We know which advice he followed, and how it led to a divided kingdom.

Even though Rehoboam was over 40 when he became king, he did not use the wisdom shown by a child who later became King of Judah when he was only seven. Second Kings 12 tells us Joash did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all the years the priest Jehoiada instructed him. He did not reject the advice and guidance of the wise, but sought after and followed the will of God.

This year we have been challenged to "be about our Father's business." There are two things we will consider as we ask "How Can I Go About My Father's Business?"

As a teenager, I can vow to honestly seek the will of God and then to do it. If we do not know the mind of God, how can we possible begin to work for the Father?

We can read our Bibles even though 60% of Christian teens do not! We can study for Bible classes and discuss Biblical issues with older men in our congregations. We can pray for wisdom and understanding as we read. We can pray for God to send people into our lives who will "lead us in the paths of righteousness."

As a teenager, I am not the "Church of Tomorrow." Teenagers are important members of the Church today. Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:10 that "we are Christ's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." In Ephesians 4, Paul goes on to say we have each been given a unique combination of talents so we can "prepare God's people for works of service, so the body of Christ may be built up until we all...become mature" (vv. 12-13). Notice, it says that we serve *before* becoming mature. It is *the* means by which we become mature.

This is just the advice Rehoboam rejected but which the boy King Josiah followed. Josiah chose to serve God and his people by restoring the long neglected temple in Jerusalem at the age of twenty. This temple was the very symbol of God's presence among His people. Obviously, Jesus knew His Father's business better than anyone and He set a lasting example of service in John 13 beginning in verse 12: "When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. 'Do you understand what I have done for you?' he asked them. 'You call me Teacher and Lord and rightly so for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things you will be blessed if you do them.'"

Bob Lorent, of Judson College, has written a book called **Keeping Your Teen in Touch With God**. When he asked teens why they were leaving the Church, one response stood out among all the others. It was a lack of opportunity for church involvement.

The teens said things like: "I do not feel I am an important part of the church ministry." "I'd be shocked if someone asked me to do something important at my congregation."

If we are really to go about our Father's business, we must become active servants and ministers NOW! It is certainly important for us to avoid sin. We must live soberly, righteously and godly in the present age just as Paul told Titus! But shouldn't everyone also know what we stand for, and not just what we stand against? How many of us are drifting along in church just keeping quiet and staying out of trouble? Or how many of us think the "youth program" should be one social activity after another?

Bob Lorent says our kids are drunk with entertainment. He says, "Pampering our teens with a steady diet of amusement parks and trips and the beach may add a few numbers to our youth group but it does not equip them to help others and themselves, and inevitably leads to a rejection of religion."

We must all use our talents to do the will of our Father. Young people committed to Christ are looking for and taking the lead in projects all over the country.

For example, *Choice Lifestyle Ministries* reports over 7,000 high school students who lead Bible studies at their schools. This takes a great deal of courage and commitment. But aren't all things possible with God? If we really want to go about our Father's business, won't we "seek and save the lost" just as Christ did?

Christian teens are spending summers working in soup kitchens and homeless shelters. They're grabbing a hammer and reporting for work at a Habitat for Humanity site. All we have to do is open our eyes, pick up a newspaper, talk to a social worker or to our minister. Think of the latch-key children who are alone all day in the summers. There are students in every school in the country who can't read or who need tutoring. There are teens in every school who are lonely, depressed, and friendless. Retirement homes and nursing homes are full of people who never have a visitor. How often do we think of those senior citizens who still live in their own homes, but are alone?

We live in a country where, even though the right to freedom is something to be thankful for, society is deteriorating morally. Our country's so-called leaders are too often deceptive and corrupt, while role models in the public eye are virtually non-existent. So what do we have to turn to; what do we believe in anymore? I know someone who you can turn to who will always stay the same, and who will always be pure. This someone is Jesus.

Jesus gave His life for us so why aren't we willing to risk our's for Him? Look at children all over the world who are dying for their beliefs: Somalia, Yugoslavia, Tienamen Square. In Luke 9:23, Jesus says, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it." Let us take up the cross with the same devotion and commitment as those in Tienamen Square who were willing to take on tanks. And when we take the cross and we're prepared to take tanks head on, we need to remember that in the end we will survive. As Luke 9 assures us, we will spend eternity with Him.

Let's look at Joash and Josiah, mere children, and their examples of service. How can we possibly overlook the wisest man to ever live, Solomon, and his commitment to service? Let us all accept this commitment to Christ and to service and truly we will successfully accept the challenge to be about our Father's business.

5th Grade

I Must Be About My Father's Business: What Can I Do?

By Sarah Nia

I HAD A FATHER ONCE, 10,000 miles away, and what seems to me now, almost as many years ago. I have a new father now, and a new way of life and a new future where once I thought I had none.

I have a new family, new brothers and sisters. My family is the Church and, according to John 8:41, my brothers and sisters are like me, believers in God, our true Father. In 2 Corinthians 5:18, the Lord tells us that "He will be a Father unto us and we shall be his sons and daughters." As His sons and daughters, we must obey and respect Him; and as our heavenly Father, He gives us love and the chance to one day live with Him in heaven.

The first four books of the New Testament tell us of a man called Jesus. He was sent from God to earth to die for our redemption. He was murdered by the same people He was sent to save. His Father sent Him here to do a deed and He did as commanded. He says in John 8:18, "I am the One that bears witness of Myself, and the Father that sent be beareth witness of Me." Jesus said that, not only to prove that He was the "Messiah," but to also prove that He (and we) have a Father in Heaven. Jesus was truly the best example of a Son God could have sent us.

In Matthew 5:16, Jesus tells us, "Let your light shine before men, and let them see our good works, that it might glorify our Father in Heaven." I must glorify the Lord, as did Jesus, by letting *my* light shine, showing my Christian spirit and beliefs to the rest of the world.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus tells us over and over again to "do the deeds of my Father." Reading this brings to my mind the true story of Corrie Ten Boom, her family and her amazing faith.

About fifty years ago, Corrie Ten Boom lived in Amsterdam with her family behind a watch shop which they owned. Corrie's father was a watchmaker as was her grandfather, and his father before him. After receiving the proper training, Corrie also became a watch maker. She was the *only* child out of eight that chose to "go about her father's business!" World War II began and the Germans gained control of the Netherlands. Corrie, being strong-willed and having strong Christian principles, did all she could to protest and fight against the Germans. With the permission of her father, she and her older sister, Betsie, became involved in underground smuggling, and eventually began hiding Jews in her family's apartments. Hiding Jews, during a time when they were persecuted for their beliefs and their race, was a serious crime that often resulted in death! It didn't matter to Corrie. This was *her* way of going about her heavenly Father's business.

Eventually, Corrie and her family were sent to prison after being turned into the German authorities. All of her family members were released after a brief stay in prison, but still Corrie and her older sister, Betsie, remained. After a while they were sent to a prison camp much like those of the Jews. Luckily, they had both been taught much about the Bible by their father, and this brought them great comfort. They were also able to share their faith and knowledge with other women in the camp. Much like Jesus, they ministered to the ill, the poor, liars, thieves, and the immoral. Their teachings, prayers, and faith helped them to glorify God during their long imprisonment. Many wonderful and unexplainable things happened to Corrie and her sister during this time. I believe that was actually God glorifying them for their love and unending faith in Him.

Corrie's story tells about her struggle to "let her light shine" and glorify her Father. She was a very religious woman, and in the end, that and her work for God profited her the most.

Like Corrie, we too must struggle to let our lights shine and glorify our Father. Corrie's family helped her with her struggle. Our family, the Church, supports us in this way so that we may be able to teach others about our Father.

I believe that to go about my Father's business, I must: first, be an example to others; second, fellowship with my Church Family and learn from them; and third, and most important, make myself into a model of Christ by spreading the word about my Father!

Questions & Answers

The Husband of One Wife

By Stan Helton

THIS IS THE FIRST STUDY in a new section of **Carolina Christian** devoted to answering your questions on biblical interpretation. I hope this column will provide a place for discussing the kind of problems that come up when we seriously struggle to understand Scripture. When possible, I will cut through the minutiae of the commentaries to get to the center of the problem; however, there will be times, as with the present question, when I will give the possibilities and leave the final determination to the reader. I do not wish for this to become a forum for debate, but for enquiry. I am responsible for my views—the editorial board of **Carolina Christian** may or may not share my views—and I take my responsibility seriously.

A brother from Hickory, NC asks, "What is the meaning of 'husband of one wife' in 1 Timothy 3:2?

You will readily recognize this as a quality demanded of a pastor or elder. "Husband of one wife" is the KJV and ASV rendering of the Greek phrase **mias gunaikos andra**, literally "man of one woman." (You may have heard some say that literally, it is "one woman man." Even though this is the Greek word order, "woman" is in the genitive case, which means it should be translated "of (one) woman," thus "man of one woman"). Besides here, the phrase occurs in Titus 1:6 (referring to elders) and 1 Tim. 3:12 (where it is applied to deacons). The converse "woman of one man" shows up as a quality required of a "true" widow (1 Tim. 5:9). From this hasty survey, we know that Paul saw "husband of one wife" as a fitting quality for elders and deacons, and that the reverse "wife of one husband" could apply to widows. Therefore, one's mate could have died and the qualification still be satisfied. Now we turn to the commentators who have bequeathed us the following four views:

(1) Elders must be married. This, however, goes against Paul's use of the phrase "wife of one husband" since he uses it to describe a widow. How many times has an elder resigned when his wife died? Did the death of his wife somehow make him a less competent leader? Paul's intent was to provide qualities that would lead to the selection and appointment of *good* leaders.

(2) It prohibits polygamy. Though polygamy is wrong, this was not the intent of the quality. Besides, polygamy was rare in Greco-

Roman society and when applied to widows this interpretation fails completely.

(3) It prohibits second marriages. This understanding has more going for it. It works with widows as well. There is even inscriptional evidence praising women married only once who remained faithful to that marriage after the death of their partners (See Gordon D. Fee, **1 and 2 Timothy, Titus** New International Biblical Commentary [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984], 80). This view would prohibit marriage after the death of one's spouse (and, remarriage after divorce, as well).

Though defensible, this interpretation ignores what happens when applied to widows. For example. if a woman's husband dies while she is young and she marries again (as per Paul's instructions in 1 Timothy 5:14), and then her second husband dies, she cannot qualify, despite her need, to be a "true" widow, and thereby become a rightful recipient of support from the church. So in following the apostle's recommendation while young, she has disqualified herself when old. I don't think this was what Paul was setting up.

(4) It enjoins marital fidelity to one's mate. What this view demands is that an elder lead an exemplary married life, i.e., that he is faithful to his **one wife** "in a culture in which marital infidelity was common and at times assumed" (Fee, ibid.).

Though numbers three and four are possible, I lean in the direction of number four as the best explanation of what the apostle had in mind. Paul's concern in the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) is to set in place good leadership to protect the church from false teachers, who were disrupting the Christian household by scorning marriage (1 Tim. 4:3; 3:4-5; Titus 1:11, *et al.*)

[Send questions and correspondence to Stan Helton, Gregg Avenue Church of Christ, PO Box 956, Florence, SC 29501.]

Brotherhood News

By Michael Mobley

DILLON, SC...The church in Dillon is pleased to announce the appointment of David Ferneyhough as their pulpit minister. David has been preaching the gospel for twenty years. GREER, SC...Oscar Craft announces the Second Annual Palmetto Biblical Studies Program, October 17-21. The theme will be "Walking In Truth." This will be a study of the three epistles of John. David Pharr and Curtis Cates will be the key speakers. IRMO, SC...The Irmo-Chapin church announces that Frank Shepherd began preaching for them on June 6. Frank formerly served as the Campus Minister for the North Charleston church. CHARLOTTE, NC...The Archdale church announces that on July 11 they began broadcasting the "Acapella Gospel Music Hour" on WHVN 1150 AM in Rock Hill, SC from 5:30 to 6:30 P.M. each Sunday. Hymns from various choruses and groups will be featured. MONROE, NC...Craig Hinricks of Winnsboro, SC will be conducting a Gospel Meeting Sept. 12-16 for the Walkup Avenue church. FLORENCE, AL...INTERNATIONAL BIBLE COLLEGE announces the establishment of the Story Scholarship fund. Dennis Jones, President of IBC, reports that this scholarship is the largest endowment in the history of the school and will be used for the training of gospel preachers. "We are pleased because of the service and sacrifice it represents," he reported. For more information, contact the school at PO Box 2279, Florence, AL 35630. SEARCY, AR...HARDING UNIVERSITY announces its 70th Annual Harding University Bible Lectureship, Sept. 26-29. This year's theme will be "Today Hear His Voice: The Minor Prophets Speak." Among the 40 speakers will be Cline Paden, Kregg Hood, Jimmy Allen, and Prentice Meador. For more information, write Dr. Don Shackelford, Lectureship Director, at PO Box 754, Searcy, AR 72149-0001.

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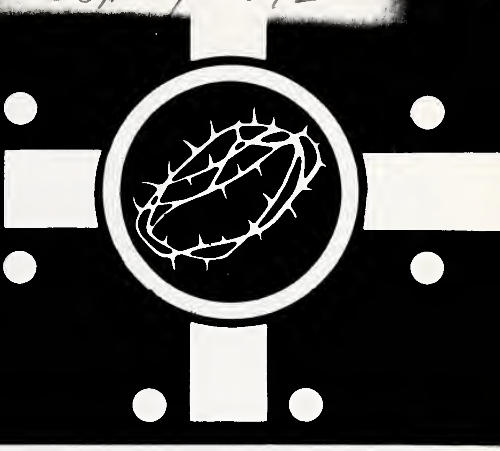

"Contending for the Faith" Studies in Jude

Carolina Christian

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Editorial

By Johnny R. Melton

THE "DOG DAYS" of summer are nearly over. "Dog Days" is an astrological term which designates the period between early July and early September which corresponds to the helical rising of Sirius, the Dog Star. It is a period in the northern hemisphere marked by hot, sultry weather. Metaphorically, "dog days" refers to a period of stagnation or inactivity.

Another term sometimes heard this time of year is "doldrums." This word refers to a period of listlessness or despondency. It has a nautical usage. Part of the ocean around the equator characterized by calms, squalls, and light shifting winds is known as the doldrums. This word is also used metaphorically to mean a state of inactivity, stagnation, or slump.

Many churches struggle with the doldrums year-in and year-out. Most churches find themselves in the doldrums during the dog days of summer.

The summer **is** long and hot and it **does** sap energy. The good news is it doesn't last forever. The bad news is the passing of dog days doesn't guarantee relief from the doldrums. Inactivity, stagnation, slump have to be replaced with active participation, freshness, and a jumping-for-joy enthusiasm.

People don't think or feel their way out of the doldrums. Churches don't, either. If you are feeling despondent, discouraged, in the doldrums, then **do** something. Volunteer to teach a class (a major problem facing the Bible School program in most churches is teacher recruitment), make a visit, invite a friend to church, learn a new song, write a note of encouragement, attend a seminar, read a good book, listen to a sermon on tape, invite someone over to your house for a visit (nothing fancy, Coke and cookies, or bread and water, it's the fellowship that counts), host a devotional for your youth group, host a neighborhood Bible study, send flowers to a shut-in. Jerry Clower used to say that when he was growing up it wasn't a shame to get lice (it came with living and working in the country); but it was a shame to keep it! It's the same with being in the doldrums. It's not a shame to be in the doldrums, the dog days of summer slow everybody down. It is a shame to stay in the doldrums. The proverb goes, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might." Paul encouraged, "Whatever you do in word or deed, do it in the name of the Lord." Just do it.

Tripp Fund

We have recently learned the sad news that Jeanette Tripp has been diagnosed with cancer in advanced stages. Jeanette is married to Gilbert Tripp, minister for the church in Easley, SC.

Jeanette's cancer cannot be treated with classic chemo and radiation therapy. Her doctors are using another form of treatment that they believe may be effective. However, the Tripp's insurance company has refused to pay for this alternative treatment.

The Easley church has established a fund to pay for sister Tripp's treatments. The Easley church is a mission work with limited resources. They are appealing to brethren everywhere to assist them in relieving the Tripp's financial burdens.

Checks should be made to the Easley Church of Christ and marked for "Jeanette Tripp Fund." Mail contributions to: Church of Christ, C/O Gilbert Tripp, 11 S. Fairfield Rd., Greenville, SC 29605.

Jude Special

With this issue we conclude the series on one-chapter books of the New Testament begun in October 1992 with a study of Jude. The series has been well received. Because of their size (and sometimes content) these one-chapter books are often neglected. We believe that every New Testament document is profitable, regardless its size (and the same can be said for every Old Testament book, as well). In the future we will explore the content of Obadiah's prophesy (the Old Testament's one-chapter book). But for now, dig into the riches of Jude's letter and we pray that the effort will be rewarding.☐

Epistle of Jude

Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ: Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.

Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Soverign and Lord.

Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.

In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings. But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals—these are the very things that destroy them.

Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion.

These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm—shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted—twice dead. They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him." These men are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.

But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, "In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires." These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.

But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.☐

Re-Reading Jude

By Stanley N. Helton

OUTSIDE JUDE 3, we often overlook this mysterious letter from the latter years of the first century. This is not new for Jude though: the letter almost didn't make it into the canon. As late as the beginning of the fourth century Eusebius listed it as a "disputed" writing (**Ecclesiastical History** 3.25.3) and the Syrian church didn't accept it until the sixth century. Part of the reason for the church's reluctance had to do with its use of apocryphal literature, especially its direct citation of **1 Enoch** in verse 14. (A good commentary, such as Richard J. Bauckham, **Jude, 2 Peter**, Word Biblical Commentary 50 [Waco: Word Books, 1983] can clue you into where and how Jude uses this literature. I can only point to a few examples in the discussion below.) We can, though, decipher Jude's letter with a fair degree of comprehension because he follows the standard form of an ancient letter, thus providing us with important clues needed to understand the letter.

Jude begins his letter with the A to B formula: "Jude...to those who are called" (v. 1). The greeting follows, adding "mercy" to the Christian pair of "peace" and "grace" (v. 2). The unexpected addition of "mercy" anticipates the point to be made in verses 20-23. The letter lacks the ordinary thanksgiving or prayer and doesn't end like an ancient letter, having a closing doxology instead of final greetings. The closing doxology suggests Jude intended the letter to be read in a worship setting. Since this closing doxology begins in verse 24, the body of the letter must end in verse 23, thus giving us verses 3-23 as the body of the letter.

This letter is a **petition**: Jude wants his readers to **do** something. Although he had wanted to write a more positive letter, he writes instead a letter of warning, appealing to the readers to "contend for the once-delivered-to-the-saints-faith"—to follow the Greek word order. "Contend" (**epagonizomai**) was a metaphor common to the athletic contests of the Greek games. The compound form of the word (**epi + agonizomai**) does not strengthen the meaning, as "earnestly contend" in the KJV suggests, but was equivalent to the uncompounded form with the same meaning (Bauckham, p. 31,32). The athletic metaphor, then, should not be pressed to justify aggression or combativeness in any form. At this point, however, Jude does not explain **how** one is to "strive" for the faith, saving those instructions for the end.

This strategy—of writing a letter of warning, instead of a treatise on salvation—became necessary because "intruders" (Gk. "certain people") had disrupted life in the churches to which Jude writes. These intruders "pervert the grace of God into licentiousness and deny our only master and Lord, Jesus Christ" (v. 4). However, before Jude got to this point, he mentioned that intruders "were long ago designated for punishment" (v. 4). Verses 5-16 expand this latter point, using a variety of literary sources.

Verses 5-7 establish that God punishes the disobedient, such as the intruders. Jude illustrates this by showing that "Jesus" (see footnote in NIV or NRSV) destroyed the unbelievers in the wilderness (Num. 14:29-37), the angels who did not keep their charge (Gen. 6:1-4 as expanded in **1 Enoch**), and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:4-25).

The intruders show disrespect for the "holy" by the way they talk about (heavenly) authority and angels. They do what the archangel Michael wouldn't do to Satan when they disputed over the body of Moses (not mentioned in the Old Testament; possibly from the lost ending of the **Assumption of Moses**?). In verses 10-13, Jude stacks denunciation upon denunciation (see Bauckham on the background of these images) to show how base these people are. The Lord Jesus, whom these people deny, is the very one who will bring punishment on them. Jude directly cites **1 Enoch** 1:9 in verse 14 to stress the certainty of judgment. (**1 Enoch** is available in several translations, the newest being E. Isaac's in James H. Charlesworth, ed., **The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Apocalyptic Literature and Testament** [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983]). Verse 16 again heaps abuse on the intruders.

After this, Jude finally turns to the readers ("but you, beloved," vv. 17,20) and what he wants them to do. He reminds them, citing the apostles (source uncertain; could refer to oral teaching, but consider 2 Pet. 3:3 and 2 Tim. 3:2-5), that people like they have encountered would come (v. 18).

At last, in verses 20-23, Jude explains to his readers **how** he expects them to "contend for the faith": (1) build yourself up, (2) pray in the Holy Spirit, and (3) keep yourselves in the love of God as "you look forward to the mercy that will come from the Lord Jesus Christ." Verse 22, playing on "mercy," instructs the faithful how to deal with those influenced by the intruders: (1) have mercy on those who waver, (2) rescue those who can be salvaged, and (3) have mercy on the defectors.

Implications of Our Re-Reading

Though the bulk of the letter describes the intruders, it is not the point of the letter. In describing the bad people Jude accentuates the urgency of his petition. Jude accuses them of a specific error: they deny the lordship of Jesus and change God's grace into license. We do not know the exact meaning of this, nor do we know the intruder's method of operation; but, it was serious because of its ethical repercussions.

"Contending" was a metaphor growing out of athletic contests—used to encourage the athletes to continue. Should this verse be used in an attempt to justify slanderous and libelous name-calling, then Jude's (and God's) intent would be missed. Jude's purpose in urging the brethren to "contend for the faith" was to keep churches together. It is a sad irony that some would run the risk of promoting the alienation of brothers and sisters by "contending" in such a way as to draw lines and choose sides (which, by the way, was the strategy of the intruders [v. 19]!). Additionally, the phrase "contend for the faith" is often lifted from its context and forced into service without asking Jude, who coined the phrase in the first place, what he meant by it. The churches to which Jude sent this letter, did not have a New Testament, as do you and I. They perhaps had a few documents that would later become the New Testament (and several besides, judging from Jude's use of them). Jude's intent, therefore, had to be explicit in his letter or his original hearers could not have understood him.

What did Jude mean when he urged us to "contend for the faith"? He tells us in specific terms in verses 20-22. When under similar threat, we are to build ourselves up, pray in the Holy Spirit, and keep ourselves in the love of God. To those influenced to follow the wrong, we are to have mercy, being careful unless we, too, become tainted. When things are as bad in our day as they were for Jude and the churches of his time, only God can take care of it, anyway (v. 24,25). □

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Called, Loved, and Kept

(Jude 1,2)

By David Leach

MY FIVE-YEAR-OLD is feeling insecure these days. I think.

For openers, he has just completed a successful run as a pre-schooler. But for Ryan, that means that kindergarten looms only days ahead. Life is about to take a big turn—and he knows it.

More disconcerting, he's not in his favorite environment right now. Mom is finishing up her stint as a teacher's assistant in a year-round school. Big brother, in the same school, isn't home for the summer yet, either. So Ryan is having to spend whole days at a (girl)friend's house where the big brother *is* home from school, but who wants to play, not with Ryan, but with his own little sister. When Graham, our oldest, comes home from school, he wants to play with Ryan, but he also wants to play with an older boy in the neighborhood. So even at home Ryan is a third wheel on a two-wheel bike.

Oh, did I say that my wife is pregnant? Yes, Number Three is six months along the way. So when Angela gets home from school she's exhausted from a full day of incubating a fetus and corralling fidgety, can't-wait-to-get-out-of-school third-graders. So Ryan mumbles about not getting enough "holding time." I figure this whole "middle child" possibility is starting to weigh on him. These days we talk a lot more about the unborn child than we talk about Ryan. And it could be a *girl*—what do you do with one of those?

Oh, yeah, speaking of big turns: our house is for sale. We'll be moving to a new home, neighborhood, and school district soon. Ryan knows we'll be renting the next place, and can't duplicate the farm mural in his bedroom, nor his neighborhood friends. But we can't tell him when all this will happen, because we don't have a clue (we've already been on the market eight months). All he knows is that we are constantly cleaning the house so strangers can walk through it.

Normally, Ryan is the epitome of buoyancy and cheerfulness. Adults and children alike are magically drawn to his red hair, mischievous eyes, and charm. He eats up the attention, gets along with nearly everyone, loves to play with anyone who will play along, and rarely has run-ins.

But lately Ryan can't get it pulled together. When frustrated (more frequent lately), his hands and feet do his talking, not his mouth. Every time we turn around, a skirmish has broken out—if not with his brother, then with someone else. Last Sunday he kicked a high school girl for no apparent reason, and the Wednesday before that, in a move that sent chills up the spine of his father the preacher, he kicked the child of a visitor! At night he can't sleep without checking out three different beds before nestling into Snoozeville. He is, the psychologists would say, "acting out" his insecurity.

The Jaws of Insecurity

When life gets a little crazy and unpredictable, feeling insecure is normal. At five, we act out insecurities with fists and fitfulness at bedtime. At twenty-five (or older) we find more inventive ways. We start complaining about the little junk, or we become obsessed with inanimate things like computers, golf, or our own thoughts. Sometimes we bounce like pinballs from one stimulus to another—from spending to movies to voyeurism to too much of a good thing. One minute we're making impulsive decisions, the next we're refusing to make decisions at all. Like Ryan we are "acting out" our deep-seated fear that our lives are losing control, losing what we think should be "normal."

Such fears urge us to make it all feel better—any way we can. Without thinking, we frantically shift focus from the reality that is our life to a new, more pleasant, more controllable reality—even if it's really only illusion. Major Temptation. Essentially, sin is exactly this process: replacing the permanent with the momentary, reality with fantasy, truth with idolatry, eternal with carnal...faith with anxiety.

Our insecurities can walk us into sin's jaws before we know what hit us. So busy trying to feel better, we make easy prey for a devil who knows he can hook us with artificial lures. Forget the obscene temptation he knows will offend us. When we are already weakened, vulnerable, and sniffing around for escape, any good-looking, pain-killing fake will do.

Security Before Striving

When looking at the first two verses of Jude, I've repeatedly asked myself the same question: What kind of people, what kind of churches, need to be so emphatically reminded that they "have been *called*, ...are *loved* by God the Father, and [are] *kept* for Christ"?

The only reasonable answer I can figure is: a people who struggle with insecurity. For at issue in the letter is the temptation to substitute real faith with a fake.

Jude needn't write this letter unless he sensed his readers's vulnerability. Perhaps he sensed a disappointment that Jesus hadn't come back as quickly as had been anticipated. Clearly, the letter demonstrates he knew how adept intruders into their fellowship could be at putting the squeeze on their faith. If his readers felt the least bit eternally insecure, he had reason to worry.

Jude's options? Discuss the nature of salvation and try to shore them up with beautiful pictures of truth; or, attack the temptations straight on and expose them as the fakes they are. It's a choice every preacher makes every Sunday. This time Jude opts for the latter (v. 3), but not without first mentioning some of the meatiest realities about their salvation.

Christians are *called* by God. God is the initiator. He chooses us. He summons us to a task, the task of service to Christ. In accepting that invitation, we find ourselves with a mission in life that shapes our most fundamental values. We draw on the power of having a special purpose in life that sees us through the fearful times of insecurity. When we realize we are called, we know that we have a special place in this world, a place designed by God.

Christians are *loved* by God. God initiates this, too. His love defines the nature of the calling. It's not all about task, it's about relationship. As our Father, he embraces us and holds us. He searches for us and forgives us. He wants what's best for us and sees that we get it. He cares about our hearts when all of our bumbling actions look like betrayal.

Christians are *kept* by God. Once again, God is the initiator. The original text is somewhat ambiguous here, a problem reflected by various translations. Some versions say that we are "kept **by** Christ," others say we are "kept **for** Christ." Both ideas are consistent with Christian thought. The meaning of this metaphor may be as Bauckham suggests: "Christians are kept safe by God for the Parousia of Jesus Christ when they will enter into their final salvation in his kingdom (cf. 1 Pet. 1.4)." Clearly, Jude means for us to know that God doesn't plan on losing us—not to Satan, not to false teachers, not through our own escape hatches. He is actively involved in protecting us from all the evil forces that can rob us of our inheritance.

Conclusion

Jude with his opening and doxology does what I do with my son when his insecurities are popping out. Before I can ask Ryan to "strive" to handle his life, I have to find ways to remind him how secure he can be in me (like more "holding time"). I may not be able to change the things that stress him, but I can let him know I love him in spite of them. With that confidence, he we will more likely withstand life's destablizers.

Before Jude asks us to "strive earnestly for the faith," he reminds us, if only briefly, of the depth and profundity of our relationship with God. Trading in God for something artificial is much harder if we can visualize His closeness. Before facing the stress that comes with faith, it helps to know that our God calls us and loves us and keeps us.☐

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Studies in Jude

Contend for the Faith

(Jude 3,4)

By Phil Stapp

IT HAD been a peaceful morning when I received a surprising phone call. It was from a man who had been a member of our congregation, who had struggled with his faith and his marriage, and had lost both. He was now divorced, lonely, and troubled. Knowing his background, I was still not prepared for his question. He had become acquainted with a woman in another city over the telephone, and now he was going to visit her. His question was, "Would it really be wrong if I had sex with her, since neither of us are married? Even if it is wrong, won't God forgive me?"

After some discussion, I realized that he was not seeking the will of God. He wanted someone to soothe his hurting conscience over a decision he had already made. The most disturbing thing, however, was his use of the grace of God as an excuse to sin. This is a danger that Christians have faced throughout the ages.

Paul addressed this problem in Corinth and Rome, but it persisted. Jude wanted to write a letter of encouragement to his fellow Christians about the wonderful salvation they shared. He changed his mind when he heard about the abuse of God's grace.

Individuals had slipped into the Christian community who were promoting sexual immorality. Their rationale was that they were under God's grace so it did not matter what they did with their bodies. This, according to Jude, was a denial of our lord and Master, Jesus Christ. Why? Because it was obvious by their lives that Jesus was not their Lord and Master.

Consequently, Jude tells his Christian readers to "contend for the faith." The word he uses for "contend" carries a meaning of struggle or fight. It was used in reference to athletic contests, especially wrestling. He is telling the readers of his day, as well as well as his future readers, to struggle or fight for the faith. Jude discusses how to contend for the faith in verses 20 through 23.

It is important to note that he does not tell them to fight **against** some individual or group, but to fight **for** the faith. It is essential that Christians fight for and hang on to their faith in Jesus Christ. We must not let other influences eat away at the faith that brings us into God's wonderful salvation. Jude reminds us that true faith is more than accepting Jesus as our Savior.

True faith not only receives Jesus as Savior, but also as Lord and Master. The words Jude uses for Lord and Master (Sovereign) have strong meanings of ownership, an absolute ruler, having power and authority over someone. The problem with using God's grace as an excuse for sin is that it denies Jesus as Lord and Master. When we have given our lives over to Christ we can no longer live as we want to, but only according to the will of our Lord and Master.

The film crew for the TV series B. L. Stryker approached a family in Florida. They asked if they could use the family's front yard for the final crash in a chase scene. They explained that all damages to their yard and home would be paid for and the family would receive

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a large fee. The family agreed. Soon the front yard was destroyed by burning cars. The house was severely damaged. Then the real bomb exploded. The crew found out that the family living in the house did not own the house. They were renting from a family in New York. They had no right to use something they did not own for their own purposes.

When we have given our lives to Christ we have no right to do with them what we want for our own purposes. When Jesus becomes our Savior, he also becomes our Lord and Master. Our lives are no longer our own. Satan and the world will try to convince us otherwise. He will do anything and everything to destroy our faith. It may not be sexual immorality, as it was in the time of Jude, but consider how many Christians have rationalized greed, hatred, slander, and other works of the flesh.

True faith not only believes in the saving power of Jesus, but makes Him Lord and Master of our lives. Is there anything in your life that is causing you to deny Christ as your Lord and Master? Then fight for the faith. The faith that puts Jesus in His proper place, as owner of your life. This is the faith all Christians must contend for, because this is the faith that brings us into the wonderful salvation of God. That is reason enough to fight for the faith in your life.☐

Phil serves the Brewer Road Church of Christ, 2010 Brewer Road, Winston-Salem, NC 27127.

Studies in Jude

Examples of Judgment Against Apostates

(Jude 5-7)

By Tim Sensing

JUDE WRITES to these Christians to "contend for the faith once delivered" (v. 3). He is motivated to write because some have infiltrated their ranks who change grace into a license for immorality and deny the Lordship of Christ. Jude charges the faithful brethren to "contend" which is clearly defined in verses 20-23. Why does Jude add verses 5-16? How does this section function? How does this passage contribute to Jude's argument and purpose? The following discussion of the function of verses 5-7 offers a few preliminary answers.

"Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that..." is an introductory formula for the entire section (vv. 5-16). One should not see the length or central position of verses 5-16 as an indication that they are the main content of the letter. This section functions only as background to the appeal of verses 20-23 that serve as the letter's climax. Jude 4 promises condemnation by emphasizing its certainty. This condemnation of these apostates has been communicated to the faithful before. Jude 5-7 is a reminder of past episodes of God's certain judgment as noted by its conclusion, "They serve as an example of those who suffer punishment of eternal fire." Jude 8-16 lists specific ethical denunciations of "these others" (v. 4), and defined as "these men;" "they;" "them;" (**houtoi eisin** in vv. 8, 10, 12, 16, 19).

Jude's christological concern is evident. Since the apostates deny the lordship of Jesus, Jude assures them that this same Lord is at the center of their promised doom. "Lord" (v. 5) is best taken to refer to Jesus which is the closest antecedent (v. 4). It is also better to accept the footnote reading of **'Iesous** found in the NIV and NRSV (Bruce Metzger, **A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament,** New York: United Bible Society, on p. 724 states, "Critical principles seem to require the adoption of **'Iesous** which admittedly is the best attested reading among Greek and versional witnesses.") Whether you take the manuscript evidence to support "lord" or "Jesus," in either case, Jesus needs to be seen as the one who delivers and later punishes Israel. This is not to explain a preexistent activity of Christ (which is also indicated in 1 Cor. 10:4), but rather Jude's application of these examples to the present situation. Jesus saves his church. Jesus judges the apostates.

Jude's first example (v. 5) is an incident from the history of Israel recorded in Numbers 13 and 14. This is a dreadful reminder of those Israelites who were led out of Egypt, traveled across the desert, and arrived at the borders of the Promised Land. However, due to their own unbelief they experienced death in the wilderness. Paul and the Hebrew writer also use this same event in 1 Corinthians 10:5-11 and Hebrews 3:18-4:2. He is not contrasting the ones he saved to the ones he destroyed. It is the ones he saved who incurred judgment. It is God's faithfulness in bringing promised condemnation that serves as a reminder to anyone who falls into the category described in verse 4.

Jude next uses an example of punishment found outside the Old Testament. Some identify the "fallen angels" of Jude 6 with the "Sons of God" in Genesis 6:2. The text of Genesis 6 itself does not teach the doctrine of fallen angels (John T. Willis, **Genesis** (Abilene: ACU Press, 1979):164-65). Later Jewish literature, especially **1 Enoch**, made angels prominent but identified some with the Sons of God of Genesis 6:2 and there made them fallen angels (1 Enoch 16:3). [Jude's dependence on Enoch is well documented. See J. vander Kam, "The Theophany of Enoch 1:3b-7, 9," **Vestus Testamentum** 23 (April 1973):129-150, and Carrol Osburn, "The Christological use of 1 Enoch 1:9 in Jude 14, 15," **New Testament Studies** 23 (1977): 334-41.] The doctrine of fallen angels is highly developed in Enoch and is the source for Jude's example here (See 1 Enoch 7; 9:8; 10:11; 12:4; 18:14-19:2; 21; 86-88; 106:13-17; 2 Enoch 18:9). It should not surprise anyone that Jude uses non-canonical sources for it has long been recognized Paul used sources in Acts 17:28.

Jude, again, identifies Jesus as the one who executes this judgment. Jude does this again later in his letter. Commenting on Jude's exegetical methodology in Jude 14-15, Osburn notes Jude's accommodation of 1 Enoch 1:9. "It is of considerable Christological importance that Jude introduces **kurion**, with reference to Jesus Christ, as the subject of this citation of 1 Enoch 1:9. By **kurion** Jude undoubtedly denotes Jesus as the eschatological Redeemer who is to triumph eventually as the Judge of all mankind" (Osburn, "Christological," 341).

Even though some would decide differently on the identity of "Lord" and the source for Jude's example, the intensity of the judgment rings clear. The purpose of the example is emphasized by a word play on "keep" that signifies the certainty of the judgment that Jesus brings to the apostates. Angels desire to "keep" their position. Jesus "kept" them in darkness bound in eternal chains until the great Day of judgment.

Jude's final example involves the certainty of judgment against the Sodomites who desired to exchange natural relations with women with unnatural relations with men. The phrase, "In the same way," refers to the judgment that was delivered and not to the sexual sin that may or may not be implied by using Genesis 6. To conclude that the sin of Sodom involved exchanging natural relations with humans with unnatural relations with angelic beings is not supported by the text in Genesis 19. This is a distortion of the text designed to rid the Old Testament of any traces of homosexual offenses. However, neither interpretation changes the function of this example. God's judgment is certain against those he opposes.

To accuse the infiltrators of the same sins found in these three examples, (especially trying to identify that all three examples involve sexual sin or unnatural sin), is beyond the scope of Jude's purpose. For example, Jude's oppo-

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nents are not necessarily guilty of sodomy. They are assured of their condemnation for their sins identified in verses 8-16.

The final phrase, "They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire," is a summary statement of all three illustrations. Both the Israelites and Angels were once faithful. There is a movement from orthodoxy to apostasy. Although they once possessed God's favor, they lost it. Just because they once possessed God's favor, does not protect them from judgment now.

Many do not see any relevance in Jude's warning for the church today. Maybe they have lost sight of the situation that confronts this generation. Jude's primary purpose is exhortation and warning to the faithful "beloved." His outrage against those who are behaving themselves in such a godless fashion is severe. Just as God has acted in the past, he will act throughout time. A reminder to all that God's anger is fierce and His justice sure.☐

Tim preaches for the Mebane Street church, P.O. Box 1861, Burlington, NC 27216-1861.

Studies in Jude

First-Century Apostates

(Jude 8-16)

By Paul Jarrett

THE PURPOSE of this article is to describe the apostates of Jude's day. Initially, I thought to look for some forms of teaching and/or conduct that were unique to these first-century apostates. However, as I devoted more time to this study, I discovered a bond between the apostates of Jude's day and apostates of every other age.

While it is tempting to identify apostates and occasions of apostasy in terms of specific teachings and/or conduct, to do so is to miss out on the essential characteristic of all apostasy. Furthermore, it is to risk making false accusations of apostasy, or overlooking actual instances of apostasy in the lives of others, including ourselves.

To appreciate the point I'm making one needs to first know the root meaning of apostasy. The Greek word from which apostasy derives means "to revolt, or to stand off from." The English word means "an abandoning of what one believed in, as a faith." While it may be assumed that ultimately apostasy will result in one's teaching and practicing that which is contrary to one's former profession and practice, the root of apostasy is the revolt and/or abandonment of one's former faith.

When apostasy is viewed in terms of the direction of one's life, rather than something to be described solely in terms of specific doctrines and conduct, it is easier to describe the apostates of Jude's day. It is easier still when we appreciate the meaning of two other words used to describe people of totally opposite character. I'm referring to the words "godly" and "ungodly."

Like the term apostasy (apostate), one's first reaction to the terms "godly" and "ungodly" may be to think in terms of some specific forms of speech and conduct. For example, we may think of "godly" people as those who attend church, pray, and maintain a sober expression at all times. On the other hand, the "ungodly" may be thought of as those whose speech is common and whose conduct is irreligious.

In all candor, for a long time, of all the Christian virtues named by Peter in 2 Peter 1:5-7, the one I felt most lacking was "godliness." While I did not consider myself to be an "ungodly" person, I must admit that I felt far removed from the sober piety I associated in my own mind with the attribute of "godliness." I had serious doubts that I could ever be classified as "godly." I recognize that some who know me may have similar doubts about my godliness, if not their own, if they share my *former* view of the meaning of godliness.

I said *former* view because, in the course of examining what it means to be godly (or ungodly), I've come to a different perspective on godliness. This new understanding makes it easier for me to pursue the attribute of godliness with hope of attainment. My new appreciation for the meaning of godliness has come with the recognition of the fact that godliness is more a matter of possessing a "God-ward attitude" than of having attained certain prescribed attributes.

As was noted earlier regarding the meaning of apostasy, godliness is ultimately a matter of direction more than it is a matter of attainment. While one may safely assume that a God-ward attitude will be exhibited by a sincere attempt to do and teach what is pleasing to God, one may be godly and still fall short of the perfection that makes God, God.

Just as godliness is characterized by a God-ward attitude, at its root ungodliness denotes a disregard for, or defiance of, God's laws and God's Person. It is this direction that offers the most concise description of the apostates of Jude's day. This is demonstrated most noticeably in verse 15 where Jude refers to Enoch's prophesy regarding the Lord's coming with His holy ones, "to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their **ungodly** deeds which they have done in an **ungodly** way, and of all the harsh things which **ungodly** sinners have spoken against Him" (my emphasis, PEJ).

Jude's epistle in its entirety represents a call to the saints to maintain their focus on God and the faith that had been delivered to them. In issuing this call to faithfulness a warning is sounded regarding the ultimate judgment to be brought against those who defy the Person of God and His laws. In so doing, Jude provides further insight into the character of apostates in the examples and descriptions he offers.

In verses 8-10 Jude describes their character in terms such as "reject" and "revile" which speak to the essential nature of apostasy which has already been described. In these verses Jude points out that the focus of these apostates is not God, but their own "dreaming" which is limited to those fleshly instincts which exhibit a closer kinship to unreasoning animals than to anything else. Rather than yielding to the things of God, they revile that which they don't understand, even angelic majesties. Jude says their rebellion is such that the angel, Michael, showed greater respect for the devil's power than they do for God's.

If one reads only verses 8-10, it is tempting to conclude that apostates are easily recognized as those openly rebellious against God. However, verses 12 and 13 indicate that apostates may be found communing and fellowshipping with the saints. In fact, it is these apostates hiding in the midst of God's people that seem to be those causing Jude to feel such a sense of urgency regarding the writing of this epistle.

The character of these "hidden roots in your love feasts" is described in terms such as "clouds without water"; "autumn trees without fruit"; "wild waves of the sea casting up their own shame like foam"; and "wandering stars." These expressions all depict those who give the appearance of being something which they are not. While the descriptions are more poetic in nature, the end result is to offer the same image as the one given by Paul when he wrote of those "holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied His power" (2 Tim. 3:5).

The apostates Jude describes ultimately care only about themselves, as demonstrated by the three examples from the Old Testament which are set forth in verse 11. First, Jude calls attention to Cain, who, when his offering was rejected by God, focused his anger on his brother. Rather than focusing his sights on God and seeking to do His will more perfectly, Cain chose to slay his brother and then tried to absolve himself of blame by asking, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Next, Jude cites the error of Balaam, who, while he never **said** anything other than what God commanded, enticed God's people to sin and to incur divine wrath because of his own desire to receive a financial reward. Finally, Jude refers to the rebellion of Korah who led a rebellion against Moses by accusing him of self-exaltation when in reality it was Korah who had the problem with pride.

While it would be nice to believe that apostates with the character of Cain, Balaam,

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and Korah no longer exist in the church, it would be extremely naive to think that such were true. Those who "are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts" who "speak arrogantly, for the sake of gaining an advantage" (v. 16) are in a far too abundant supply in most churches. Like Cain, they resent their brethren rather than focusing on doing God's will in their own lives. Like Balaam, they say all the right things but pursue their own hidden agendas. Like Korah, they accuse others of pride, when in reality it is their own desire to be heard and followed that controls them.

The only way the church will ever be free of the threat of apostasy is for individuals to determine in their own lives to "contend earnestly for the faith." Each one must determine to be guided in all things by a God-ward attitude. When this occurs there will still be much to learn and do before it can be claimed that the church knows and practices God's will in all things, but at least the church will be heading in the right direction.☐

Paul serves the Archdale church, 1824 Tamworth Dr., Charlotte, NC 28210.

Studies in Jude

Contending for the Faith

(Jude 17-23)

By Ross Thomson

"WE DEFEND religion too much. Vital religion, like good music, needs no defense, but rendition. A wrangling controversy in support of religion is precisely as if the members of the orchestra should beat folks over the head with their violins to prove that the music is beautiful." —Harry Emerson Fosdick

The violinist has a broken marriage. The cellist has a heart problem. The oboe player is a recovering alcoholic. None of the performers will ever be famous. None of them are individually great. Yet, when the conductor raises his baton, all is forgotten as the orchestra unites to create a harmonic texture that elevates the soul and quiets the anxious heart.

So it is with the church. The church is a symphony of the spirit. No room for *prima donnas*. No room for people who draw attention to themselves. No room for private agendas. Our glory lies in our oneness. Our prime directive is to follow the lead of the Conductor so that harmony might triumph over discord and unity over division. When we fail in this, no matter what our other achievements, we have misunderstood our reason for being; and forfeited the ear of a lost and hurting world.

Yet how easily we forget the orchestra and how quickly we start a good conflict. Anger is a durable emotion, after all; and surely it is sanctified by the cause it serves!(?) What a pleasure to fight and to feel holy at the same time! What a pleasure to thrash the daylights out of someone—and to do it in the name of Jesus! Why it beats even a good barroom brawl for rollicking good fun. Not only can you be violent, but you can feel righteous while you are about it. You can tell your opponent that you are acting out of "Christian love" as you eviscerate him with your spiritual sword. The experience is totally invigorating. The devil enjoys wearing a halo.

As Bertrand Russell once observed, "Few people can be happy unless they hate some other person, nation, or creed." People long to be superior to others and nothing fulfills that desire more effectively than a good battle with an enemy. In discrediting and demeaning an opponent (real or imagined) I elevate myself. If a doctrinal question can be made the pretext, then so much the better. I can now do it all in the name of the Lord, and forget that this attitude is intrinsically at odds with the gospel.

Though it is a remarkable thing that Christianity has survived the attacks of its enemies, it is even more remarkable that it has survived its "well-meaning" defenders. Pugnacious, combative people do little to confirm the message that God is love, or to inspire others to humbly carry a cross. Yet, the message seems to triumph in spite of them, for a great truth is always more powerful than the arguments that surround it. Positions change, arguments undergo modification, personalities come and go, but when all the smoke has blown away the core still remains. The core and the perennial issue is the story and personality of Jesus.

"An invasion of armies can be resisted, but not an idea whose time has come." That idea is the cross of Jesus Christ.

Thus, the problem for the church is to insure that it maintains its fidelity to this cause without doing so with an angry and shrill voice. The difficulty we face is to oppose error without becoming like the enemy. The challenge we are given is to "contend" without being "contentious."

Jude wrote to a church faced with terrible threats from professed believers. From within the ranks of the movement had arisen thinkers who considered themselves to be advanced. They came with new ideas that threatened to destroy the sweetness of the gospel message and to ruin the harmony of God's people. They turned grace into license, denied Jesus, rejected authority, and attacked abusively whatever did not fit their understanding of the scheme of things. Grumbling, faultfinding, scoffing, divisiveness and lack of spirituality were their trademark. Then as now, such people constituted a desperate danger to the church.

In the face of such a threat, Jude responds with blazing moral indignation. As Moffatt puts it: "Sky, land and sea are ransacked for illustrations of the character of these men. They are 'hidden rocks,' 'clouds without rain,' 'dead uprooted tress,' 'wild sea waves,' 'wandering stars.'" Jude arms himself with Scripture, Hebrew history and legend in his trumpet call of faith. The work is a wake-up call to a church sliding into apostasy—and the message hit people like a hammer blow. Moffatt is right on the mark when he describes the book as "a fiery cross to rouse the churches."

This, I think, is the key. Jude is not angry over some abstract principle, or question of procedure, or matter of opinion. He does not rail out of personal rancor. He is angry because the whole attitude of the people and the whole intellectual thrust of their position is at odds with the cross. They were the very opposite of meek, and the word submission was not even in their vocabulary. Clearly, they could not be ignored. But, how should the church oppose them?

Certainly, we cannot oppose their cliques with a clique of our own—or their arrogance with arrogance of our own. No. Jude reminds us that the apostles themselves warned of such people. We should not, therefore, be surprised or demoralized by the fact of their existence (vv. 17-19). Nor should we respond by reflex action. Rather than lashing out we should (a) build **ourselves** up in the faith, (b) pray in the Holy Spirit, (c) keep **ourselves** in God's love, and (d) wait for mercy (vv. 20-21).

What about other folks? Jude contends (a) "Be merciful to those who doubt;" (b) "snatch others from the fire and save them;" and (c) "to others show mercy, mixed with fear" (vv. 22-23). Jude's counsel is that we oppose arrogance with humility, aggressiveness with mercy, and self-absorption with concern for lost hurting people. What a powerful message! What a wake-up call to today's church!

During World War II, at a meeting of the British parliament, one of the members rose and banged his fist on the table, "I believe," he said, "in always fighting the enemy with his own weapons!" Winston Churchill grinned at the man and asked him just how he would go about stinging a bee!

Christians must learn this lesson. We must, as Christians, oppose all error; but we do not battle the way the world does. It is vitally important that we use Jesus' strategy. How we fight is just as important as what we fight for. It is not enough for us to "win" arguments, or to justify ourselves before the world. Our battle is to tell the truth and to live it—to sound a distinctive message without being sectarian, to meet the forces of division with the spirit of harmony, to answer error with the example of our lives.

Not an easy strategy, but a winning one. ☐

Ross serves the Brooks Ave. church, 700 Brooks Ave., Raleigh, NC 27607.

"He that will not reason is a bigot; he that cannot reason is a fool; and he that dares not to reason is a slave."
-Sir William Drummond

More Than Hope

(Jude 24,25)

By Ernie Thigpen

TWO WOMEN sit closely on a couch. They turn to face each other.

"I can't believe you'll be a mother in just a few hours."

"Neither can I!" (As she says this she opens the present her friend has brought.)

"I love it. His first baby gift, and it's such a sweet sleeper outfit. I love baby clothes. Thanks."

"Oh, you're welcome. I love baby clothes, too. And to think, you didn't even have to go to the hospital or anything."

They laugh.

"No," says the mother-to-be. "Adoption certainly has some benefits. I was so excited when the lawyer called to say that our baby was here. And that he was a boy. Bob really wanted a boy, I think. We already have a name picked out. 'Jason Robert Jamison.' Sounds impressive doesn't it?"

They laugh again.

She looks into her guest's eyes. "What can I say to you? You're such a great friend and you've stood by me through all of this. I don't know that I'd ever made it without you."

They embrace.

At just this moment, through the front door, comes a man. His body language screams that something is dreadfully wrong.

"Oh, Bob. I'm so glad you're home. Look, Dear, Cynthia brought us this little baby sleeper. Isn't it darling?"

Bob looks right at their guest. "Cynthia, could Beverly and I have a moment alone?"

"Certainly," their friend replies as she leaves the room.

Now alone, Bob sits down by his wife and takes her hands. "Honey," he says, "I've got some tough news. The lawyer just called me at the office."

Quickly, she stands.

(Fear)"Is something wrong with our baby?"

"No, no, he's just fine. (Bob is now standing). There's something else. It's the girl. The birth mother. She's...she's changed her mind. She's going to keep the baby."

(Confusion) "What? What?! She can't do that!. That's...that's our baby! We signed all those papers. She signed them too!"

"Beverly, you know, the lawyer kept reminding us that the mother had a three day period where she could rescind the agreement. It's the law. We knew that."

(Disbelief) "But that's our son. That's our Jason Robert Jamison. He's ours."

"No, Beverly. He's not going to be ours."

(Anguish) "But, doesn't she understand what she's doing? How hard we've tried to have a baby? How hard it was to accept that we,... that I couldn't have a baby?"

"Honey, It just wasn't God's will that we have this baby."

(Anger) "Oh, God's will is it? Doesn't it matter how much I have prayed for this child? How long I have prayed for this baby?"

"God doesn't always work on our schedule, babe."

(Resentment) "Oh, you and God and His will! Why is He doing this to me?"

Bob reaches out to console his wife.

(Outrage) "Get away from me!" she screams. "Leave me alone! I hate you!! I hate God!! I.. hate...my...barren...body!!"

(Despair) She falls into his arms, inconsolably.

After an eternity of silence, she asks in the smallest whisper, "What are we going to do now?"

"I guess," he replies, "we'll just have to keep on trying. Hoping and trying."

Ours is a dangerous journey, this walk with Christ. The climb to heaven seems slippery at best and being afraid of the pain of falling, many of us resist the climb at all. "Why climb," we ask, "if we're just going to fall anyway?"

"The rewards of completing the journey are great," some are quick to answer. "They far outweigh any risk you might have to take. So get going. Keep trying. And don't give up hope."

That sounds good. But a quick look at Jude reminds us would-be-climbers that many have fallen hopelessly along this path. Sodom and Gomorrah fell. Balaam fell. Korah fell. Cain fell. The children of Israel within sight of the promised land, fell. Even the angels who were already secure in the place of reward we hope to gain, fell. If they all fell, what's the use of trying?

"Keep hoping," some say. "There's always hope." Let me ask you, "When life trips you up, and you find yourself slipping and sliding, and reaching out to grasp anything that will break your fall, where do you find hope? How does this couple keep on hoping? Keep on trying? If the wife responds, "I'd rather not try again than go through this pain," would you blame her? Would you be so bold to go to her and say, "Don't give up hoping. Keep trying, Get on out there. The rewards far outweigh any pain you may be suffering?"

We need something more than try. We need something more than hope. We need assurance. Assurance that when we climb, we don't have to slip. Assurance that when life slams us hard to the ground, we don't have to stay down. Assurance that when things go dreadfully wrong, in those times of fear, confusion, disbelief, anguish, resentment, outrage and despair, that there is someone who is able to lift us, to hold us, to heal us, to stand us up, and to keep us from falling.

There is Someone. He is the only God. He is our Savior. He has all power. He has all authority. And it is His great desire to keep us secure, to lift us up, to cleanse our blemishes, to bring us into His presence, and to give us great joy.

God wants you saved. God wants to keep you saved. He's not in the business of giving you salvation now and changing His mind later. He has no interest in adopting us today and abandoning us tomorrow. What can you say about a God like that? "To Him be glory and majesty through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all time and now and forever. Amen."□

Ernie serves the Central Church of Christ, 2052 North Church Street Place, Spartanburg, SC 29303.

Book Review

By Jane Thacker

Bender, Betty S., **To Love a Child** (Nashville, TN: 20th Century Christian, 1989).

PARENTS EVERYWHERE occasionally need help in dealing with their children. Betty Bender's book **To Love a Child** provides some practical, Scripture-based advice on how to rear children God's way. Mrs. Bender writes from many years of personal experience and observation and offers her findings in a spirit of Christian love.

Parents often fail to consider how their feelings and behavior will affect their children. Throughout her book, Mrs. Bender addresses this problem and emphasizes the importance of letting your children know they are loved unconditionally, just as God loves His children unconditionally. Mrs. Bender also stresses the need for parents to always think before they react to something their child has done and to never respond in anger to that child. Several chapters are devoted to the subject of discipline. Mrs. Bender points out that discipline is not synonymous with punishment; discipline more accurately means guiding and molding your child to lead a happy, productive life.

Rooted in common sense and the word of God, **To Love a Child** is a valuable resource to help parents remain aware of things they already know about child-rearing, but don't always take time to remember.□

Jane and her husband are rearing two children at 2717 Powhatan Dr., Sumter, SC 29150

Giving People God's Word

By Jim Albright

HOW CAN you be a New Testament church without a New Testament? The answer to the question is simple. You can't. Today there are approximately 3,000 language groups numbering more than 300 million people who have never heard the gospel message. These people are isolated by linguistic barriers. They speak their own language but have never learned their country's official language.

The Albrights believe that to accomplish Christ's commission, the gospel must be presented to everyone in the language they understand best. Each person needs at least some of the written Scripture in their mother tongue.

Through the Summer Institute of Linguistics, Wycliffe translators receive the finest linguistic training available. They live with the people, learning their customs and language. The highest linguistic and translation standards are upheld to insure accuracy and reliability of the Scriptures.

Bible translation must include a partnership with literacy. The goal is to see lives transformed through the power of God's Word. Translation gives God's Word to the people, and literacy enables them to read God's Word.

Approximately half the membership of Wycliffe Bible Translators serve in support areas as printers, nurses, mechanics, administrators, computer specialists, teachers, truckers, pilots, buyers, radio technicians, artists, secretaries, builders, and in other ways.

The Albrights decided they would be missionaries before they met. Jim was a math and science teacher. They thought there was no real place for them in missions until they read that Wycliffe needed school teachers. They moved to Brasilia, the capitol of Brazil, with their children Eric (1st grade), and Missi (kindergarten). Wycliffe loaned Jim to the American School of Brasilia where the translators's children attended. In 1981 The school asked Jim to choose computers and to create the computer curriculum.

During their first six-year term, Barbe worked first in the finance office, and then served as librarian for the translators, enabling them to access the commentaries, linguistic, literacy and translation helps that are available.

Jim and Barbe Albright

After a year-and-a-half furlough they returned to Brasilia. Jim became the computer coordinator for Wycliffe Bible Translators in Brazil. He worked to make computers easy for the translators to use. Jim helped typeset three New Testaments and one major textbook on Bible translation principles. As assistant to the hostess, Barbe helped make sure rooms and apartments were ready for people traveling through or coming to stay. Translators could depend on finding a pleasant room, food to eat, and a sign welcoming them.

More people are needed to GO. There are more than 900 language groups currently without a New Testament translated into their language. Wycliffe is currently working in more than 1000 language groups. The Albrights have been traveling to Christian colleges challenging college students to help with Bible translation. Their next assignment will be working with the International Computers Services arm of JAARS located near Waxhaw, NC. They plan to make a short trip to Brazil either in January or May 1994 to maintain their permanent visas.

More people are needed to SEND. Wycliffe Bible Translators and JAARS do not salary any of their members. Each member is dependent upon the Lord for his financial needs. That's why partners at home who will support Wycliffe team members with their gifts and prayers are vital to the work. There are more than than thirty individuals and one church presently supplying 60% of the Albright's financial support. They may start their new assignments as soon as they secure 90% of their support.

More people are needed to PRAY. Will you be willing to GO, PRAY, or SEND? Please ask the Lord what you should do. Then do what He says. God still answers.

The Albrights are currently attending the Providence Road church in Charlotte NC. Their sponsoring church is the North Springfield Church of Christ in Springfield, Oregon.☐

Jim & Barbe Albright have many stories to tell about how Bible translation makes a difference in peoples's lives. Contact them at JAARS, PO Box 248, Waxhaw NC 28173, (704) 843-2040; or Wycliffe Bible Translators, PO Box 2727, Huntington Beach CA 92647, (800) 388-1928.

Brotherhood News

By Michael Mobley

ST. ANDREWS RD., COLUMBIA, SC...On June 27, 1993 three new elders were appointed: Baxter Deadmon, Jerry Satterfield, and Bill Young. They will be working with the current eldership: Ed Brown, Tom Bailey, Dudley Oliver, and R. W. Senn. LINVILLE FOREST, KERNERSVILLE, NC...Announces their 12th Annual Youth Weekend, September 24-26. This year's theme will be "Boot Camp 1993: Soldiers of Christ Arise!" They will be featuring Express and the Pied Pipers from Ohio Valley College. CARY, NC...Ladies Day, November 6. This year's theme will be "The Good Ol' Days." AUGUSTA RD., GREENVILLE, SC...Wesley Crisp is the speaker for a new radio program sponsored by the Augusta Rd. congregatiopn. It will air each Sunday morning from 10:00 to 10:30. It began August 1 on station WSSL, 1440 on the AM dial. NORTHVIEW, STATESVILLE, NC...Recently 13 North Carolina congregations and several Iredell County residents shared in an effort spearheaded by the Northview congregation to collect food, supplies, and money for the flood victims of the Midwest. On August 1, Bill Pearson and Ken koko delivered approximately 650 cases of food, 50 cases of cleaning supplies, 30 bags of diapers, 500 jars of baby food, 15 cases of bottled water, 10 cases of cold drinks, several boxes of clothing, and nearly 100 each shovels, mops, and brooms. Also, $8,000 in money was sent for the flood victims. All of this was delivered to the brethren in Arnold, MO. Another trip is being planned for October 1. If anyone wishes to participate in this effort, call the Northview church at (704) 873-9779. NATIONAL HOTLINE...The churches of Christ now have an AIDS Resource Hotline, 214-669-AIDS. FLORENCE, AL...Leadership & Church Growth International announces the "Great Smoky Mountain Spiritual Growth Seminar," Pigeon Forge, TN, October 10-13, 1993. It will feature such speakers as Jerry Humphries, Jim Moffett, and Charles Hodge. For more information, contact LCGI, PO Box 2560, Florence, AL 35630. MATANZAS, CUBA...**The Christian Chronicle** reports that from April 15 through May 5 the churches of Christ conducted the first religious campaign in Cuba since the Communist Revolution. They reported 94 baptisms!

Send news items to Michael Mobley, PO Box 312, Mooresville, NC 28115. 388-1928.☐

One of the lessons of history is that nothing is often a good thing to do and always a clever thing to say.

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CHURCH LEADERSHIP SEMINAR

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Resource Person:
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Seminar theme:
Biblical and practical insight for leading the church through times of conflict.

Topics:

Friday, October 29
"Symptoms and Sources of Conflict"
Conflict can be identified and managed.

Saturday, October 30
"Options and Strategies for Intervention"
Different variables require different kinds of action.

"Managing Change and Transition"
The big question is not whether we change, but how we manage transitions.

"Case Studies"
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Telephone: 704/464-4983

The program will begin at 7:30 P.M. on Friday, October 29 and it will conclude at 3:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 30
There will be a $25/person Registration fee
(The fee covers overnight lodging for Friday, breakfast and lunch on Saturday, and handout materials for Seminar participants).

CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

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Editorial

By Johnny R. Melton

We rejoice with the Thomasville church on their soon-to-be-celebrated 10th Anniversary. (See photograph on the front cover and the related article on page 7.) Speaking of anniversaries, the church in Hickory, NC will be forty-nine on October 8. A Homecoming is planned for October 10 in recognition of that milestone. There is an article regarding the recent consolidation of the West Hickory and Hickory congregations on page 5. Please read these articles and be encouraged by the growth and development of God's people in these places.

These two articles illustrate one of the fundamental purposes of **Carolina Christian**'s existence: To promote the cause of Christ in the Carolinas and elsewhere. We want to feature Carolina churches and their accomplishments for the Lord on these pages. We believe reporting the church's progress in a given location is scriptural—it is neither boasting, nor is it trusting in human strength, as David did when he numbered Israel and incurred God's wrath. It is in keeping with Paul's example following the first missionary journey in Acts 14:27, "On arriving [in Antioch], they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles."

Send reports of special events and milestones in the life of your congregation to us for publication. We are eager to report what God is doing in our midst.

Tripp Fund

In reporting Jeanette Tripp's illness last month and the financial burden it is placing on her family, we wrote that her insurance company had refused to pay for her chemotherapy, because it was "experimental." That report was true at the time it was written. However, under threat of legal action, the insurance company has relented and will now cover its share of the cost of the treatments. That's the good news. The bad news is that the treatments are enormously expensive and the Tripp's co-payment portion is more than they can handle on their own. The need for financial assistance remains great.

Please send a contribution to help relieve the financial burden that her illness has created. Send your gift to: Church of Christ, c/o Gilbert Tripp, 11 S. Fairfield Rd., Greenville, SC 29605. (Make your check to the Easley Church of Christ and mark it for "Jeanette Tripp Fund."

Church Leadership Seminar

October 29-30 are the dates for the first annual Church Leadership Seminar sponsored jointly by Carolina Bible Camp and Retreat Center, Inc. and ten North Carolina churches. The theme for the Seminar is "Biblical and practical insight for leading the church through times of conflict."

Dr. Charles Siburt, Director of the Doctor of Ministry program at Abilene Christian University will serve as resource person for the seminar. Brother Siburt, by virtue of both training and experience, is well qualified to lead this seminar.

The site for the seminar is the Carolina Bible Camp and Retreat Center near Mocksville, NC. Carolina Bible Camp built this facility with the desire that it would be used for church-wide activities such as this.

There will be a $25/person registration fee for the seminar. This fee will cover overnight lodging for Friday, breakfast and lunch on Saturday, refreshments throughout the seminar as well as handout materials for seminar participants.

Join church leaders from the Mebane St. church in Burlington, the Archdale and Providence Rd. churches in Charlotte, the Cole Mill Rd. church in Durham, the Friendly Ave. church in Greensboro, the Hickory church, the Jericho church in Mocksville, the Brooks Ave. and N. Raleigh churches in Raleigh, and the Northview church in Statesville for a period of study and fellowship that will be a blessing to you.☐

Associate Editorial

Bible Study Helps, No. 1

By Jim Mullican

Carolina Christian is a magazine for all Christians in the Carolinas, as well as anywhere else. It is read by many preachers, teachers, and probably some scholars, but the majority who read it are ordinary Christians. Many probably never attended any college, much less a Christian college. They read this magazine in order to gain inspiration and insight to help with the temptations faced on the job and in the home. Those who write for the magazine are urged to remember that while an essay on "Eschatology and the Parousia" may be appreciated by the scholar, when expressed as "The End of Time and the Return of Jesus," it is of benefit to both the scholar and the average man or woman in the pew. If it is necessary to use terms not familiar to all, they should be clearly defined so that all can benefit from them.

Having said that, this article is intended as the first in a series of perhaps six articles on the resources which are available to the ordinary Christian who is serious about obtaining as much knowledge as possible from Bible study. It is assumed that preachers will be familiar with many of the resources to be discussed, but not even all preachers are familiar with some of the resources available. All of the books to be discussed should be available through Carolina Christian Bookstore or any other religious bookstore. While it's true that the Bible alone is the Word of God, it is equally true that rightly handling it can be made much easier with the aid of some good study helps.

Bible Dictionaries

A Bible dictionary is much what you would expect it to be. For example, in John 10:22, we read of Jesus being in Jerusalem for the "feast of the dedication." From the Old Testament, we remember the Passover, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles, and other special days, but we do not remember reading about the feast of dedication. Just as an ordinary dictionary is where one turns upon encountering an unfamiliar word such as "mordant" or "lachrymose," this is a time when a Bible dictionary is needed.

A Bible dictionary will list people, places, teachings, customs, concepts, sins, virtues, animals, and just about any other word found in the Bible, and will have anywhere from a paragraph to several pages to explain the meaning. We can find there that a talent weighed about sixty-six pounds, a shekel was less than one-half ounce, while a homer was forty-eight gallons and a log was one-half pint.

Looking up "Dedication, Feast of," in the Bible dictionary, we learn that it was a non-scriptural feast which originated in the years between the Old and New Testaments. About 167 B.C., the Macedonian King of Syria tried to force all the Jews to worship the Greek "gods" and "goddesses." He desecrated the Jewish temple by offering a sow on the altar there in worship of Olympian Zeus. There followed a bloody three-year war, after which the Jews enjoyed a century of independence prior to the Romans occupying their county. In 164 B.C., they cleansed the temple and rededicated it to the worship of God during what we know as December. They annually commemorate this event with an eight-day "festival of lights," today commonly called Hanukkah.

Bible dictionaries are a rich resource for anyone who wants to study and understand the Bible. Prices range anywhere from about $20 for a good single-volume dictionary to more than $100 for a five-volume set. The single-volume dictionary would be well worth the price for any Christian.

Bible Encyclopedias

Like the Bible dictionaries discussed above, there is a great variety available under the heading of Bible encyclopedias. They may range from two volumes to twelve or more, with prices ranging from $35 to $250. The average set will contain four or five volumes and cost around $100 to $125. Their contents will also be similar to those in a Bible dictionary, but usually more detailed and thorough.

Suppose you wanted to study the miracles of Jesus. A Bible encyclopedia would have several pages concerning what constitutes a miracle. It would probably list both Old Testament and New Testament miracles, perhaps with some discussion of each. It might discuss the meaning of various Hebrew and Greek words translated as "miracle," "wonder," "sign," etc. It might even look at miraculous claims outside the Bible, or at modern claims that miracles are still performed.

Or suppose you wanted to know about Moab, mentioned several times in the Old Testament. Ruth, the great-grandmother of King David, was from Moab. In a Bible encyclopedia, you would find a map showing the land of Moab, along with a discussion of the terrain, climate and lifestyle of the people. You would read about the earliest references to Moab, about their religion, their growth, their decline and eventual assimilation into other cultures. You would also read about the famous Moabite Stone, a ninth-century B.C. inscription in which Mesha, king of Moab, relates how Omri, king of Israel, had conquered Moab, but also how Mesha had defeated Omri's son, Ahab.

Three good sets of Bible encyclopedias are the inexpensive **Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia** (two volumes), the **Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible** (five volumes), and the **International Standard Bible Encyclopedia** (four volumes).☐

Rt. 4, Box 30-A, Clyde, NC 28721.

Rejoice in the Lord!

By C. David Shuping

Throughout the religious world it is commonplace to hear of church splits, conference or convention delegates drawing "lines in the sand" and the formation of yet another "Christian" denomination. Unfortunately, these same sounds have echoed throughout the country as congregations of the Lord's church splinter and denominate themselves in not-so-grand sectarian style.

This article is not about congregational dissension but about Christian solidarity. Paul's hope for the church in Philippi is realized in chapter one, verse twenty-seven. He said his desire was that he might "...hear of [their] affairs, that [they] stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, and not in any way terrified by [their] adversaries...." The adversaries of truth, unity and peace are always among the saints, especially where Christians are determined to love and serve the Lord with consecrated hearts.

More than twelve years ago, the Hickory Church of Christ "stepped out in faith, believing there was a need, at the right time, with the right help" (Maynard 1982, 7) and planted a new congregation. The West Hickory church started with 19 adults and eventually erected a building just large enough for several small classes and a seating capacity of approximately 100. Through the generous and sacrificial contributions of several churches and individuals, the work continued through the years. However, the church was never able to become self-supporting despite the work and aspirations of its members.

The leadership finally took a close look at what the future held for the struggling work. Continued support beyond the next several years was shaky at best. Though not in a financial crisis at present, the leadership began prayerful deliberations concerning the Lord's best interest in maintaining its mission effort. With its sister congregation only six miles down the road—which is mighty close in the Carolinas—the leadership asked God to help them decide if it would not be best to merge the two works together for the glory of God. After meeting with the elders of the Hickory church and believing that God's wisdom was with them, the two congregations merged into one family on September 5, 1993. In a worshipful and harmonious spirit, on that Lord's Day the two groups thanked the Father for bringing them together and asked for His blessings in their union. The West Hickory members presented a plaque to the elders of Hickory church honoring the heritage of the two congregations and celebrating the "coming together" into one body of the two churches.

The future is bright for the church in Hickory. We will celebrate our annual Homecoming on October 10—marking the beginning of our fiftieth year of service to God. Our membership roll now exceeds two hundred. The elders have appointed me associate minister with the new church and I look forward to working with Johnny Melton who serves as pulpit minister. Together, we intend to strengthen and edify the body of Christ while reaching out for precious souls in our community. We want to be a "servant" church.

We invite you to visit with us when you have the opportunity. The Hickory Church of Christ is a place where you will hear the Good News of Jesus proclaimed without reservation or apology. In spite of the many adjustments that accompany any merger, the Lord has blessed us with a spirit that can best be described in Paul's words: "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, Rejoice!"

Endnotes

Maynard, Frank. "Developing a New Testament Church From 'Scratch.'" **Carolina Christian** 24 (April 1982): 7.☐

C. David Shuping, 22 Colonial Avenue, Granite Falls, NC, 28630-1304.

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Thomasville Church of Christ

By Rob Albright

The Thomasville Church of Christ will celebrate her Tenth Anniversary on November 14. The church will host a singing that afternoon at 2:30. An Open House with refreshments being served will follow the singing. Jonathan Seamon will be the guest speaker at the morning and evening worship services on that day.

The church in Thomasville met for the first time on November 13, 1983. There were twelve present on that occasion. The elders were Bob Hoots and Reid Davis. Scott Hurston did the preaching.

Two years later a four-acre tract was purchased along Highway 109 North. Construction began in 1986 on the present building and on Sunday, April 5, 1987 twenty members met for the first time in the building for worship.

Many individuals sent financial contributions. Congregations that helped were Northview and Abilene in Statesville, NC; Helen Street in Fayetteville, NC; Ninth Avenue in Haleyville, AL; Highway in Fouke, AK; Cole Mill Road in Durham, NC; Providence Road in Charlotte, NC; Brooks Avenue in Raleigh, NC; Jericho in Mocksville, NC; and Brentwood Hills in Nashville, TN.

Tim and Valerie Shoulders moved in June 1986 to Thomasville with support from the Brentwood Hills congregation to be the first full-time minister.

In June 1987 Jonathan Seamon came with the first VBS Mission Team from Brentwood Hills. It was a huge success and it continues to be so.

The Shoulders family moved to Tennessee in the summer of 1989 and Rob and Sharon Albright moved in October of that year to work with the Thomasville church. The church became self-supporting in January 1991. Attendance on Sunday mornings at that time was averaging 103.

Several men have been with the congregation to inspire and to lead the brethren to improve their abilities and to become more mature in Christ. Appreciation is expressed to: Bill Dorriety, Clarence Dailey, E. Ray Jerkins, Ted Waller, Jonathan Seamon, Keith Stotts, Bob Crum, Wayne Kindall, and Mac Lynn.

The Thomasville church is presently served by three elders: Kirby Ball, Reid Davis, and Walter Staton. There are four deacons and a congregation of 160 members.□

Rob Albright, RR 4 Box 623, Thomasville, NC 27360.

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Dialogue Preaching

By Rob Albright

I used a different method of preaching on a recent Sunday night in Thomasville. I guess the best way to describe it is "dialogue preaching." Usually, I speak and the audience listens. I get very little participation. Maybe a few heads will nod and a rare "Amen" will be noised. Most do open their Bibles and we read a passage together. But on this Sunday night I did something different and the response was quite positive.

Communicating God's message is still a vital part of the church. Preaching the word of God changes lives. We preachers do not want to be irrelevant or boring. We do not want to be merely endured. Quality preaching means we should do our best studying God's word and then present the fruit of our study as skillfully as we can to our hearers.

Dialogue preaching involves asking questions and sharing comments from the audience during the sermon. I discovered that this method of preaching stimulated a higher level of interest. The preacher gets an immediate response to his message and the members have a more active role to play. There is also a more productive atmosphere for further communication with one another and members can actually persuade themselves to make necessary changes in their lives.

The gospel is from God. It does not need changing. Such would be perversion. The responsibility of preachers is to understand the will of God and to teach it to others. Dialogue preaching is an effective option for communicating the message of God to others.☐

Rob dialogues with the church in Thomasville, NC. Contact him at Route 4 Box 623, Thomasville, NC 27360.

My Favorite Max Lucado Story

By Paul Jarrett

Christianity Today lists Max Lucado among the seven most admired Christian writer in America. While his story-telling approach to writing is not always appreciated in a brotherhood more accustomed to doctrinal dissertations, it is a style that has always had great appeal to the masses. A parallel can be seen in how the religious leaders and the common people of Christ's day differed in their reactions to the parables of Jesus.

While I am more accustomed to writing in the doctrinal style that is characteristic of most ministers, I do appreciate Max Lucado's writing style. Perhaps, I appreciate it even more because it is not a style of writing that I feel capable of utilizing on a regular basis. However, I would like to try sharing with you my favorite Max Lucado story. It is not a story that is found in one of his books. It is not even a story about Max Lucado in a direct sense. Rather, it's a story about a young couple I shared a meal with while conducting a revival for a small church in West Virginia.

As we were eating the couple began to tell me about how they were just beginning to emerge from a low period in their spiritual lives.

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They had returned to the small church in which they had both grown up just a few months earlier. About the same time they had begun experiencing some business and financial problems. Their faith was being drained and the church they had grown up in seemed to be too small numerically and spiritually to provide the edification they needed.

They found themselves becoming critical of the church which they felt was failing them. They were ready to go elsewhere, or perhaps even give up on church altogether. However, something had happened at that point in their lives that had changed their mind and pointed them in the direction they needed to go to rekindle their faith and zeal. At that point in the conversation they asked me if I was acquainted with the writings of Max Lucado.

Having read all of Lucado's books and having had my own faith strengthened by his writing, I was prepared to hear them relate something from one of Lucado's books that had helped turn their lives around. I told them that I had indeed heard of Max and then sat back waiting to hear which of his stories had helped them with their struggle. But, instead, they asked me a second question.

They wanted to know if I had ever heard him preach. I told them that I had not, though I had heard from those who had that Max's writing was more impressive than his preaching. My observation went uncommented on as they began to relate to me a story about a visit to the Oak Hills Church of Christ to hear Max preach.

It happened that in the midst of their spiritual struggle they were taken to Texas on business. This business trip found them in San Antonio on a Sunday morning with nothing on their schedule. Being acquainted with Max Lucado through his writings, they decided to take advantage of this opportunity to hear him speak. It was this visit to Oak Hills that they said placed them on the path to a renewed zeal for Christ.

Again I sat back waiting to hear what Max Lucado had said to turn their lives around (apparently, the reports I'd received on his preaching had been wrong). However, I was left puzzled when both husband and wife related how their visit to Oak Hills ended with them back in their motel room discussing how the service that Sunday had been no more meaningful to them than the services of their small home church in West Virginia.

The mystery as to what it was that had turned their lives around was finally made known. As they had talked about their reaction to the service at Oak Hills they said they both came to a point of discovery. They said, "we both concluded that if our zeal could not be stirred by the preaching of Max Lucado and the singing of an audience of almost a thousand worshippers, the problem must lie with us." They went on to note how they had determined that upon returning home they would make a conscious effort to involve themselves wholeheartedly in the worship and the teaching program of the church.

The conclusion of the story was that they both had started teaching Bible classes, the man had begun leading singing, and both had focused their attention on worshipping God and edifying others. By turning their attention to God and to their fellow Christians they had escaped the clutches of their focus on self which was eating away at their faith in God and their zeal for serving.

This young couple's story has become my favorite Max Lucado story for two reasons. First, it reminds me that I cannot expect even as inspiring a writer as Max Lucado to increase my faith unless I am willing to make personal application of the principles of Christ in my life. Secondly, it prevents me from becoming overly discouraged when my best efforts to motivate others seem to be to no avail. I confess I'm no Max Lucado when it comes to edifying people. However, it seems that, in some cases anyway, even Max Lucado is no Max Lucado.☐

Contact Paul at 1824 Tamworth Dr., Charlotte, NC 28210.

The Georgetown Church of Christ needs sound preacher. Send resume with picture to Marlyn Benton, 436 Wildewood Ave., Georgetown, SC 29440. Must include last three congregations worked with and/or references with phone numbers from each. Call (803) 527-2925 for more information.

Gay Hixson (1916-1993)

By Bob Bannister

In the book of Ruth we read of the family of Elimelech: his wife, Naomi, and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. They had moved from Bethlehem of Judah to the land of Moab during a famine. After their arrival in Moab Mahlon and Chilion married Ruth and Orpah.

Within ten years Elimelech and the two sons died in the strange land, leaving Naomi and her daughters-in-law. Naomi pleaded with Orpah and Ruth to return to their families. Orpah went back, but Ruth made the confession that is still quoted over and over again: "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God..." (Ruth 1:16).

Naomi was concerned that she had no linage since her husband and two sons were dead. She had no grandchildren. However, as we often forget, God is still in charge. Ruth married Naomi's kinsman, Boaz, who was very wealthy. God gave to Boaz and Ruth a son they named Obed. Obed was the father of Jesse, and Jesse was the father of David, and, as we know, our Lord Jesus came from the linage of David.

God has a way of glorifying those who **love** and **obey** him. There will always be a remnant left. Naomi, a woman of values and influence, was such a woman.

Although this love story was recorded approximately 3300 years before Gay Nell Statum Hixson was born, her life has much in common with Naomi's and she, too, was a woman of values and influence.

Gay was born June 19, 1916 at a poor time in the mountains of southeast Tennessee. She went to school in Pikeville, Tennessee where she had at least one great teacher: George W. DeHoff, who was to become one of the great preachers in churches of Christ in the twentieth century. In school she met and fell in love with Owenby Hixson. They were married September 10, 1938. The young couple lived in Chattanooga, Tennessee and attended the St. Elmo church of Christ. Gay was active in the church and served the Lord faithfully until her death. Even as a young bride she was becoming a woman of values and influence.

Gay and Owenby were blessed with two sons: Michael Owenby (Mickey) was born in 1946 and Gary Dean arrived in 1949. They all attended the meetings of the saints on every occasion possible—reluctantly, at times, by the boys. But, with the example of commitment set by their parents, both boys have grown up to be devoted Christians. Mickey serves as an elder in the Avondale church, near Atlanta; and Gary is one of the hardest working and most devoted deacons in the Providence Road church in Charlotte. Mickey and his wife Sue Ann, and Gary and his wife Jane, have great families. Both of these daughters-in-law remained by Gay's side until her death. In her family, Gay Hixson was a woman of values and influence.

Gay and Owenby moved to Winston-Salem, NC where, from 1939 to 1956 they were instrumental in the establishment and growth of the church. During that time the church grew from about twenty souls to over 300. Gay played an important role in this growth with her knowledge of the Scriptures and her wisdom in teaching them, not to mention her hospitality and undying love for the lost. She was mourned by many friends who had known and loved her when she left us for heaven. As a young married woman she was a woman of values and influence.

In 1956 Owenby and Gay moved to Charlotte and became members of the church of Christ on The Plaza. Gay, once more, showed her value as a Christian woman, through her Bible knowledge, and diligent work as a Bible class teacher of young people. In 1960 Owenby was appointed an elder in the Plaza church. That Owenby was respected enough by the Plaza brethren that they would appoint him an elder speaks well of Gay's character. One of the reasons Owenby was qualified to serve as an elder was because Gay was a woman of values and influence.

Just five short years after moving to Charlotte Owenby died unexpectedly. He was forty-four years old. His death left Gay in the role of a single parent. She was left to provide for both the physical and the spiritual needs of herself and her sons. When her husband died Gay was forty-four years old herself and had little experience in the work force. However, due to her deep faith and tenacity, she found employment with the Mecklenburg Medical Group. She worked for twenty-five years, putting her boys through high school and college. Needless to say she succeeded wonderfully as a single parent. Many of the doctors and staff with whom she had worked attended the memorial service conducted for Gay. In the trials and vicissitudes of life she proved to be a woman of values and influence.

After Mickey and Gary married and started their families, Gay began the new roles of mother-in-law and grandmother. Jane, Gary's wife, reports that Gay was very influential in her decision to become a Christian. One can't talk to any of the grandchildren and fail to see evidence of Gay's influence in their lives. Mickey's son Josh exemplified this influence in the eulogy he delivered at his grandmother's memorial service. Indeed, in the lives of her children and grandchildren Gay continues to be a woman of values and influence.

Gay has provided me with memories that I will always cherish. The visits I had with her to talk about things back home in Tennessee, going on trips with her and Al Harvey, calling her to discuss biblical principles, being in Bible classes with her, kidding her about her yard (which she kept beautifully), and so much more.

Mention must be made of a dear friend who meant so much to Gay in her last few years: Al Harvey. They often ate out, came to church, watched ball games on television, had long discussions together, and, in general, gave each other much support. Al related many times that Gay had done so much for him that he couldn't do without her. He now knows that God provides a way to cope with the loss for all of us who loved her.

Gay, we miss you; but as we talked before you left, we aren't in the same league with God when it comes to making offers to His children. We give God thanks for the values you maintained throughout your life, and the influence you have had on everyone you met. As one of your friends in the Ladies Class said, "When Gay talks about Abraham, Sara, Isaac, Ruth, you would think she knows them personally." Maybe she did.

Gay Hixson never knew what a great influence she had on people who knew her, that is why she was a woman of values and influence.

Proverbs 31:10 says, "who can find a virtuous woman, for her price is far above rubies." Verse 28 says, "Her children rise up and call her blessed: her husband also, and he praises her." This really says it all for Gay Hixson.☐

Bob Bannister, a longtime friend of Gay's, may be contacted 5500 Kuykendall Rd., Charlotte, NC 28270-0276.

God's People and the Philistines

By Robert Curry

To most Bible students the mention of the Philistines raises a decidedly negative image. Yet, there was so much more to them than their villainous reputation suggests.

Many questions can be asked regarding the Philistines. Who were they? Where did they live? What were they like? Historians and archaeologists have explored these questions, and many more, to discover their secrets. Of course, biblical archaeology offers no proof of biblical things, but, as someone once said, it "puts flesh on the bones of history." When seeking greater understanding of God's people and their relationship to the obscure Philistines, biblical archaeology can, indeed, help us put flesh on a people who caused so much concern to Israel.

Who Were the Philistines

The recorded history of the Philistines begins, for all practical purposes, within a study of the so-called "sea peoples" along the eastern

Mediterranean in the second half of the thirteenth century B.C. After their defeat at the hands of Ramases III of Egypt the Philistines were allowed to resettle the southern coastal plain of Palestine in a strip of land about forty miles long and ten to twenty miles wide. This resettlement is confirmed by the Onomasticon of Amenope, a collection of nine manuscripts credited to Amenope, a scribe in Egypt.

As they established themselves along the eastern Mediterranean coast the chief cities of Ekron, Ashdod, Askelon, Gaza, and Gath emerged. Extensive excavation has been done throughout their land, sometimes with fascinating, even mystifying results (consider the numerous burial pits for dogs at Askelon). Much of their culture, theology, and daily life has been studied and cataloged, revealing a complex society and a cultural development too often not associated with the antagonists of God's children.

Their culture shows the influence of Mycenaean, Cypriot, Egyptian, and Canaanite society. Their burial customs are one example of the cultural melting-pot they became. In spite of such influences, however, much of their society became uniquely Philistine. One of the better examples of this would be their pottery. Even the casual student of archaeology can recognize the distinctive patterns displayed on the bowls, urns, and flasks that have been unearthed throughout their ancient cities. Earlier examples still show a cultural blend, but later a definite Philistine design emerged and became their own.

The Philistines were an idolatrous people, worshiping the god Dagon (Dagan) in temples located in Ashdod and Gaza (1 Chron. 10:10), Baal-zebub (Baal-Zebul) in Ekron, and the goddess Ashtaroth throughout Philistia (1 Sam. 31:10). Their idolatry became a problem for Israel as they, too, came to practice such ungodliness and were severely punished by God (Judges 10:6). Perhaps their idolatry is seen best in the famous account of Samson who, while a prisoner in Gaza and bound as a symbol of Dagon's power over him, tore down the idol's temple and destroyed many people (Judges 16).

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Israel and the Philistines

Of course, the stereotype of the Philistines is that of a battle-ready, conquering nation. Indeed, this was the case, just as it was with many or all of the kingdoms, empires and nations of the Ancient Near East. The so-called "Mortuary Temple" at Mendinet Habu in Egypt has revealed graphic battle scenes depicting the Philistines with their ornamental headdress, armament and a navy. Wall reliefs in Egypt reveal naval and land forces of the kind that caused one Egyptian chronicler to write that "no land could stand before their arms.... They laid hands upon the lands as far as the circuit of the earth, their hearts confident and trusting...."

Their rise in military power (see articles such as "The Philistines Enter Canaan—Were They Egyptian Lackeys or Invading Conquerors?" **Biblical Archaeology Review**, November/December, 1991) caused them to become an integral part of Canaanite history and therefore, the history of Israel. Their military strength became a force to be reckoned with. A messenger to Eli, priest and judge of Israel, reported that "Israel has fled before the Philistines and there has also been a great slaughter among the people..." (1 Sam. 4:17, NASV).

The Bible records much contact between Philistia and the nation of Israel. Abimelech, king of Gerar, a city south of Gaza, had an interesting encounter with Abraham (Gen. 20) and Isaac (Gen. 26), both of whom lied, saying their wives were their sisters, out of fear of the Philistines. Philistia played a vital role in the life of David, who killed the giant Goliath (1 Sam. 17) and later, fearing the anger of Saul, would flee into Philistia to escape the powerful king (1 Sam. 27:1,7). The savagery of the Philistines is perhaps seen best with the death of Saul and his sons after their battle at Mt. Gilboa (1 Sam. 31).

The many confrontations between Philistia and Israel inevitably caused God's anger to come upon the Philistines. In a battle that cost Israel dearly, the ark of the covenant was brought out of Shiloh (1 Sam. 4:3-5), but Philistia captured it and brought it to Ashdod (1 Sam. 4:11; 5:1). After a series of rather catastrophic events (1 Sam. 5) they returned the ark laden with a "guilt offering" to "ease His hand from you, your gods, and your land" (1 Sam. 6:3,5, NASV). To be sure, God's anger came upon the Philistines many times due to their constant affronts to God's people (Jer. 47; Ezek. 25:15,16; Amos 1:8; et al.).

Conclusion

The Philistines were much more than merely a savage people who sent giants into battle, harassed the nation of Israel, and angered God. They were a real people who lived their lives in Canaan on the eastern Mediterranean coast. Their culture was one of mixed origins that, in many ways, emerged into a distinctive pattern of their own. Idolatrous and war-like, Philistia was also an ancient nation with its own measure of splendor. they worshiped their gods, expanded their cities, lived their lives and buried their dead during the time recorded in part on the pages of the Old Testament.

I encourage you to look more closely at these fascinating ancient people, for they offer much to the rich history of Israel. Publications such as **Biblical Archaeology Review** and **Biblical Archaeologist**, as well as books by archaeologists such as Moshe and Trude Dothan of Israel and Lawrence Stager of Harvard University will open doors to understanding an often overlooked part of the Old Testament.☐

Robert Curry preaches for the church in Duncan, SC. Contact him at PO Box 728, Duncan, SC 29334.

Book Reviews

By Tim Sensing

Long, Thomas G. **Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible**. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989; **The Senses of Preaching**. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988; and **The Witness of Preaching**. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989.

Here are the three best books on preaching in my library. I consider Thomas Long the best in the business when it comes to communicating to preachers about preaching. Fred Craddock is creative. But I am average. Craddock leaves me with a sense of inadequacy as I strive to put into practice what is a gift for him. Craddock is a preacher's preacher. Haddon Robinson is practical. He gives me nuts and bolts useful for beginners. Somewhere, sometime, I will need to move beyond Robinson to reach Craddock ultimately finding my own voice for witness. I have fifty-nine books on homiletics in my library. I have read several more. Thomas Long is the best.

The Witness of Preaching is Long's text on the mechanics of sermon building. He gives a solid overview of the exegetical method necessary behind each sermon. He concentrates on form, focus, and function. He allows the theological concern of the text speak clearly. He is well versed with the current literature. He brings the best of current scholarship (from Craddock to Ricoeur) and blends them with the legends of yesterday (Sangster to Stewart). He deals with introductions, transitions, length, children's sermons, titles, conclusions, illustrations, and a host of practical concerns. His fresh perspective affirms some and challenges other time honored methods with common sense.

The approach is flexible so that you can adapt to any genre form found in Scripture. The approach is practical and easy to learn and use. I find his approach gives me the assurance that I am being faithful to the text. This text is a must companion for a preacher early in his training.

His book on **Literary Forms of the Bible** delves into genre. Here, he supplements **Witness** with specific exegetical practices needed for the variety of literary forms found in Scripture so the transition from text to sermon will be faithful. The premise that form and function of the text are inseparably woven and God chosen becomes the foundation for choosing sermon form and function. To believe that any and every genre of the Bible can be molded to fit one homiletical model does great disservice to the message. Long explores the genres of Psalm, Proverb, Narrative, Parable, and Epistle. This leaves the door open for further study into the other genres found in scripture (e.g. Prophetic and Apocalyptic).

Long supports historical investigation to discover the background of the text. What did it once "mean" in a particular time and place? However, he adds to such historical investigations a literary and rhetorical aspect. He asks the following questions of each genre in each chapter:

1. What is the genre of the text? Not wanting just to name it, Long desires to understand how that genre works.

2. What is the rhetorical function of this genre? This goes beyond the literary question and asks how the text functions for the reader.

3. What literary devices does this genre employ to achieve its rhetorical effect?

4. How in particular does the text under consideration, in its own literary setting, embody the characteristics and dynamics described in questions 1-3?

5. How may the sermon, in a new setting, say and do what the text says and does in its setting?

See if this small sampling of paragraph headings alone can help you.

1. Allow the Movement of the Sermon to Follow the Movement of the Text.

2. Allow the Opposing Forces in the Text to Become the Opposing Forces in the Sermon.

3. Allow the Central Insight of the Text to Be the Central Insight of the Sermon.

4. Allow the Mood of the Text to Set the Mood of the Sermon.

The Senses of Preaching is Long's conversation with preachers about preaching. It is by far the most entertaining of the three volumes. **Senses** is the text that I have re-read more than any book in my library. Here, my soul is stirred. He identifies with my concerns. He gives practical advice about what matters most. Although he claims that this is not a theology of preaching, anyone who has not yet thought about such matters will be greatly benefited.

What is preaching anyway? A complete answer is given in **Witness**; however, from the preacher's perspective at the door shaking hands, Long answers the question differently in **Senses**. Rooting himself in Augustine, who copied from Cicero, Long concludes in chapter 1, "At the door of Augustine's parish, he would be pleased if people would say, 'I learned something today; I was moved by what you said; and, I intend to do something about it.'"

Greidanus, Sidney. **The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature**. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988.

Greidanus gives the preacher a needed integration between biblical hermeneutics and homiletics. He knows the literature well. He begins with an enlightening discussion of a biblical definition of preaching. The case for expository preaching is well made. He defines biblical forms usefully. His informed and conservative background is refreshing and balanced.

He is well versed in various methodologies (e.g. Form Criticism, Historical-Critical Method, Redaction Criticism, Rhetorical Criticism, Canonical, and more). He gleans what is useful from each methodology while rejecting those conclusions that lead one astray from conservative views of inspiration. However, his primary contribution is in the area of Literary Criticism. From this foundation he moves practically from text to sermon.

Greidanus is especially helpful in discussing various literary types and how they can best be preached. He discusses at length the genres of narrative, prophetic, gospel, and epistle. His examples alone provide rich exegetical material for preaching and are worth the price of the book. Each chapter follows with specific guidelines tailored for that genre. He discusses in depth in each chapter Text Selection, Literary Interpretation, Historical Interpretation, Theological Interpretation, Theme Formulation, Form of the Sermon, and the Relevance of the Sermon. These same categories are described in detail in earlier chapters.

Greidanus provides a useful text for the preacher who does not have the time to ferret out all the hermenuetical tangles. He goes beyond the simplistic formula of "command," "example," and "necessary inference," without drinking from the extremes of existential methodologies. The bridge from exegesis to homiletics has often been ignored. Greidanus provides a solid hermeneutical bridge.

Turner, J. J., **Leadership Through Church Growth**. Abilene, TX: Quality Publications, 1989.

J. J. Turner has written an easy to read guide to leadership for the average church member. He states in the preface his intentions to keep his remarks brief for today's busy leaders (p.6). He clearly recognizes the nature and limitations of this analysis by encouraging congregations to engage in greater detail study of each of the points presented (p. 81). Although short (104 pages), Turner gives the reader an exhaustive array of topics and lists that covers every nook and cranny of leadership. Although possible to read the entire book in one setting, most would not want to digest all he says in that time frame. It would be impossible to dig out all the ramifications of his suggestions even in one quarterly study. Therefore, this lesson book would serve best as a launching pad for further study.

Every chapter contains various lists that should prove valuable as a resource for the teacher guaranteeing that some important aspect of a topic is not glossed over lightly. Since topics are treated more in an outline form, Turner does not develop any subject in great detail. The lists should not be read as one reads a novel for they will tend to blur together. The lists should be used more as a resource of brainstorming ideas of the topic at hand. Each of his thirteen chapters contains either discussion questions or action oriented tasks to further promote reflection and application in the classroom. These questions also exhaustively survey the subject of leadership and would prove valuable in an in-depth discussion group. Two or three of the questions alone would give rise to healthy discussion in any classroom context.

The title, **Leadership Through Church Growth**, is misleading. Maybe a better title would be, *A Suggested Model for Church Leadership*. Turner's practical suggestions are reflective of one model without giving evidence of an awareness of the diversity of leadership styles and needs in various congregations. He strives to cover every aspect of leadership while leaving the impression that it can be made to fit into one narrowly defined mold. The leader who loves detail, administration, and has a gift of organization, will find an abundance of suggestions. The book is reminiscent of the platitude style used in the "pop lit" section of your local bookstore: A 1001 self-help cures for all your leadership worries. Or as he lists in his appendix, 125 "Do's" and "Don'ts" for Leaders.

Due to the diverse cultural and generational considerations in many of our congregations, Turner's book becomes limited in its utility. Turner needs to demonstrate some awareness of current methodologies and research from the church growth literature and the sociological fields. His use of the Bible displays this same lack of depth. Often, the Bible is used as a source for another list, hanging without historical or literary context, or as proof texts giving authoritative support to his suggestions. Subsequently, many busy leaders will pass over this book in favor of one that will be more suited to meeting their specific needs. Yet, to give the necessary narrative structure and detailed analysis necessary to correct this deficiency, Turner would have to either write several hundred pages or narrow his topic to specifically address leadership and church growth.

For the busy leader who desires to gain an initial vision of the horizon before him, this text fits the bill. For the one who is unable or unwilling to wade through a more technical discussion, Turner has provided a quick and easy survey of the field. The subject of leadership that a church requires is an awesome and some-

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times overwhelming responsibility. Turner may overwhelm a beginner with the volume of items to remember, but he also provides a handle for those desiring to pursue the task.

Wheeler, Max. **Reflections On Our Hymns: Stories of 77 Hymns and Gospel Songs**. Abilene: Quality Publications, 1992.

In a short, easy to read style, Max Wheeler has given us a valuable tool. Although there are other books on the same subject with many of these same stories repeated, this book will be a useful addition to your library. I have often used those other sources to organize a devotional centered around cherished favorite hymns. Often I find myself rewording and condensing that material so that it would be more suitable in the worship setting. I did not read one hymn story in Wheeler's book that I would modify.

All the stories included are concise, easy to read and understand. He offers a wide variety of your favorite songs that you have known all your life. The information at times is humorous, fascinating, and surprising. However, when the history of the song touches a special part of your own story, the song becomes a blessing as it never was before. That song will comfort, inspire, strengthen, and encourage your heart with renewed vigor.

The book begins with a brief history of hymnology. Included in shorter articles are topical odds and ends that are most interesting. Some of these topics are: "Gospel Songs From Secular Tunes," "Singing the Amen," and "Shaped Notes."

The most useful aspect of this book is the inclusion of Hymns from our own heritage. Alexander Campbell, L. O. Sanderson, Tillit S. Teddlie, and others have written many fine hymns that are worth our knowing. Wheeler's source material for hymns written in our fellowship includes many first-hand interviews.

The only added feature I would recommend is the inclusion of verses of songs that are not found in our hymnals. To see a work in its entirety gives it added flavor and depth.

Through private reading and use in corporate worship, this book will aid our understanding and will greatly increase our appreciation for the songs we sing.☐

Tim Sensing, P.O. Box 1861, Mebane Street Church of Christ, Burlington NC 27216-1861.

The Empty House

By Michael R. Mobley

An empty house is so sad. Empty and alone because the life that once thrived within its walls is gone. A lot of living can fill eleven years in the same house. A lot of living did! If only now those barren and lonely walls could talk with you, the stories they could tell of love shared, and how three precious souls were nurtured by the struggles of life, work, and relationships. They would speak of how God loves and takes care of those who serve him. You would hear stories of the many friends, loved ones, and foes who came through their doors. You see, one of the greatest blessings or treasures of serving God is that you get involved with so many different lives! Yet, the greatest blessing of serving God is the richness it weaves into the lives of your own home.

However, there is hope! Very soon those same walls will again share the lives of three more precious souls. Once again the old house will thrive with the struggles and joys of life.

As I think back on that house, I think of my life and some challenging questions flood my heart: who am I, what am I doing, why am I living this way, and just what is my philosophy and mission for life? Now, I love the Word of God so much that I crave to learn it and apply its truth to every arena of my life. I relish the challenge to understand it more perfectly. It simply thrills me to meditate on its message. I have found no other teaching that can satisfy me or my life.

As I stared at those barren and lonely walls and though about the eleven years of nurturing and building three lives in that house, my heart rushed to answer those questions. No matter where I searched, the philosophy and mission of life given to us by our Creator, Jesus Christ the Son of God, is the truth I found for myself. From Christ's own teaching and others who expressed what He taught, I have found this truth by which I have lived:

1. "I must suffer many things. I will be rejected by the Jewish elders, the most important priests, and the teachers of the law. I will be killed. However, after three days, I will be raised from death.... If anyone wants to follow me, he must carry his cross everyday. He must say no to himself and follow me. The person who wants to save his life will lose it, but every person who gives his life for me will save it. What good is it, if a person gets the whole world, but looses or wrecks his own soul? ...If anyone begins to plow a field, but then looks back, he is not fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:22-25,62, Simple English New Testament).

2. "It is not the critic who counts, nor the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the do-er of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, and comes short again and again; because there is not effort without error and shortcoming; but he who actually strives to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best, knows in the end the triumphs of high achievement and who at worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat" (Theodore Roosevelt).

3. "What makes life difficult is that the process of confronting and solving problems is a painful one.... Yet, it is in this whole process of meeting and solving problems that life has its meaning. Problems are the cutting edge that distinguishes success and failure. Problems call forth our courage and our wisdom; indeed, they create our courage and our wisdom. It is only because of problems that we grow mentally and spiritually. When we desire to encourage the growth of the human spirit, we challenge and encourage the human capacity to solve problems" (Dr. M. Scott Peck, **The Road Less Travelled**, page 16).

4. "My brothers and sisters, you should be very happy when you experience many kinds of troubles, because you know that the testing of your faith will develop more endurance. Endure, so that your actions will be complete. Then you will be mature. You will have everything; you will need nothing" (James 1:2-4, SENT).

5. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, because God is the one who is working in you. How? He causes you to want to do what pleases him. Then you will be pure and innocent. You will be God's children. Spotless in the middle of a dishonest and evil generation of people. You will shine among them like stars in the universe. Hold out the message of life" (Phil. 2:12-16, SENT).

6. "Glory to God! He is able to do so much more than we are able to think or ask for. God uses the power that is working in us. Glory to God among all the people that he has called out and in Christ Jesus for all generations forever and ever. Amen" (Eph. 3:20-21, SENT).

Now, this is the truth for everyone's life. Yes, the applications are different as we live in different arenas. However, this truth is universal for it is God's truth. Yet, what does it mean? That the most significant decisions and choices I have made, that the most influential relationships I have built, and that nearly everything I

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have done has led me to where I am today and molded me into what I am today. The most amazing truth is that we are not done because the journey is not finished! We do not know where this journey we call life will go along the way; but, if we are serving God, we do know where we are going—Heaven! How our Creator works out His will for our lives, I am not always sure. I am persuaded that He did and that He does and that He always will when I serve Him. So, with the opportunities and events and relationships that occur in our lives, God is at work to make of us even more faithful and productive servants who will one day inherit His reward of eternal life (Eph. 2:1-10). Why? Because we lived to do His will.☐

PO Box 312, Mooresville, NC 28115.

It Is His

By Paul R. Mobley

Jesus said, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). In Romans 16:16, speaking of the congregations at Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, and others, Paul referred to them as "churches of Christ."

Thus, Jesus built His church over a period of some three years, instructing and directing the first leaders of its daily affairs, the apostles. He admonished them that the disciple is not above his master (Matt. 10:24), also warning them that "heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35), leading to the logical conclusion that His instructions will not be changed by Him, and, therefore, cannot be changed by man. He clearly warned those who would depart from His teachings, saying "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you" (Matt. 7:21-23). Jesus freely taught everyone who would listen, or who had a question, what those who would follow Him—who would become a part of His church—would need to learn, to believe, and to do. And He made it clear that the standard He gave would be followed by those who hoped to gain entry into His church, and ultimately receive the rewards promised.

That standard is the Bible,rightly interpreted (2 Tim. 2:15).

In that statement we learn what Jesus did to purchase His church. He left heaven, came to earth teaching people wherever He could, cared for the sick, fed the hungry, and made the final payment by giving His fleshly life on the cruel and inhumane cross. He had then completed all payments and it, His church, belonged to Him. John said that Jesus pleased God, saying, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand" (John 3:35). Luke pointed out that Jesus was then exalted to the right hand of God (Acts 2:33), and that God made Him Christ and Lord (v. 36). Jesus only, thus, has the right to specify what His church is like, and what is required for entry.

Jesus said that entry requires "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). In this passage "kingdom of God" refers to the church that Jesus established. Luke records the procedure by which about 3,000 were added to the church (Acts 2:37-40). He later gives an example of hearing the truth, believing it, repenting of contrary ways, confessing that Jesus is the Son of God, and being immersed in baptism (Acts 8:29-39). Paul explains the meaning of this procedure of baptism in Romans 6:3-6. Entry into His church is specified.

In likemanner, then, those who would follow Christ must follow His instructions from the moment they begin the entry procedure on throughout their lives. Those entire teachings and instructions are contained in the Bible. Thus, there is no need for us to be headless, aimless, confused, or at odds with Jesus: all is provided.

Jesus has done His part. Our part is left to be done. Today is the best day to begin, and it is the best day to continue in the way Jesus has directed.☐

Brother Mobley lives at RR 3 Box 410, Cynthiana, KY 41031. His son, Michael, is Brotherhood News Editor for **Carolina Christian.**

Stone Punishment

Charles R. Lambert

God ordained stoning as a means of execution in the Law of Moses (Lev. 24:14-22). There were a number of crimes for which the penalty was stoning, such as: cursing God, idolatry, wizardry, blasphemy, and sabbath-breaking. In fact, there were eighteen different capitol crimes.

The procedure for execution by stoning was as follows. A person who witnessed the crime, placed his hand on the accused's head. The accuser was allowed to throw the first stone. All the others who were watching up to this point then followed suit and stones were thrown until the guilty one was dead. All of the people, both men and women, pitched in to stone the guilty party. One can imagine what it must have been like to be a victim of the torture inflicted by rocks pounding the life out of one's body.

What would get one stoned in Jesus' day? John 8:4-7 finds Jesus in the temple very early in the morning teaching His followers. The Scribes and Pharisees, who looked for an opportunity to kill Jesus, brought a woman and placed her in the midst of Jesus and His disciples. She was accused of adultery—caught in the very act. This surely was a tense situation: both Jesus and the woman were in danger of being stoned. Jesus turned that threat around when He wrote on the ground, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." After that each one of them slithered back into the crowd.

Stephen, one of the seven deacons in the Jerusalem church, was accused of blasphemy, and stoned. A man named Saul, who was later called Paul, held the coats of those who stoned Stephen. Stephen became the first Christian martyr (i.e., one killed for his testimony of Christ). Stephen died praying like Jesus: "Father, forgive them of this act of sin."

Stoning would be a horrible way to die, but so is dying without obeying the gospel. It is God's command that we serve him each day, in every way we can, including worship. There is nothing worse than lukewarm religion. God wants strong Christians to carry out His commandments.

Stoning is a terrible way to die, but fire and brimstone is worse; and that will be the fate of those who are unprepared for the Judgment Day☐.

3418 Longwood Lane, Conway, SC 29527.

Brotherhood News

By Michael R. Mobley

CAROLINA BIBLE CAMP AND RETREAT CENTER, MOCKSVILLE, NC...Ten congregations are co-sponsoring a Church Leadership Seminar, October 29-30. The theme will be "Biblical and practical insight for leading the church through times of conflict." The resource person for the seminar will be Dr. Charles Siburt, Director of the Doctor of Ministry program at Abilene Christian University. For registration and more information, contact Johnny Melton at the Hickory Church of Christ. ORANGEBURG, SC...The church announces that on August 22, 1993 brethren Robert Hawks and David Bozard to the office of elders. GREENSBORO, NC...AGAPE of NC invites you to celebrate eleven years of service with its Annual Dinner on Saturday, October 16, 1993 at the Four Seasons Holiday Inn in Greensboro. Tickets are $13.00 and may be purchased from AGAPE. COLUMBIA, SC...One September 12, the Longcreek church dedicated its new building and Jim Bill McInteer was the guest speaker. AIKEN, SC...The church is pleased to announce that Randy Gore has accepted the position of Youth Minister. ROCK HILL, SC...The Charlotte Ave. congregation announces its Youth Rally 1993 on November 6-7. The theme will be "I Wanna Be Like Christ" and the featured speakers are Luke Lentz and Kirk Sams.☐

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October 29-30, 1993

Dr. Siburt

Resource Person:
Dr. Charles Siburt,
Abilene Christian University

Seminar theme:
Biblical and practical insight for leading the church through times of conflict.

Topics:
Friday, October 29
"Symptoms and Sources of Conflict"
Conflict can be identified and managed.

Saturday, October 30
"Options and Strategies for Intervention"
Different variables require different kinds of action.

"Managing Change and Transition"
The big question is not whether we change, but how we manage transitions.

"Case Studies"
Working on actual conflict situations–including your own.

The Seminar will be held at
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For more information, contact:
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RR 2 Box 137
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Telephone: 704/464-4983

The program will begin at 7:30 P.M. on Friday, October 29 and it will conclude at 3:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 30
There will be a $25/person Registration fee
*(The fee covers overnight lodging for Friday, breakfast and lunch on Saturday, and handout materials for Seminar participants. Make checks to **Church Leadership Seminar**).*

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

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East Gate of Troas
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All items to be printed in a given month's issue should reach the editor no later than the 20th day of the preceeding month. For example, an item to be included in the July issue must be received by June 20.

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Editorial

By Johnny R. Melton

IN OCTOBER THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS of Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., following a review of my work as interim editor, asked me to continue to serve as editor of the magazine. Not only was my work as editor evaluated but there was considerable discussion of our editorial policy as well. The policy was reaffirmed and the Board restated its determination for **Carolina Christian** to be a positive voice promoting the cause of Christ in the Carolinas.

I am grateful for the support of the Board. I am also appreciative of the encouragement that so many have given to me as I undertake this work.

I want to thank those who have worked closest with me over the past five months: Jim Mullican (Associate Editor), Tim Sensing (Book Review Editor), and Michael Mobley (News Editor). These brethren have not only written for the magazine but their promptness has made it possible to easily meet publication deadlines and they have served as sensitive advisers in the editorial process.

I am also grateful to the men and women who have submitted articles for the magazine. I believe one of the strengths of **Carolina Christian** is that we welcome freelance articles from Carolina writers. While we will be soliciting articles for theme issues more regularly in the future than we have in the past, freelance articles from Christians in the Carolinas will continue to receive priority on these pages.

Jerry Senn has accepted the post of Managing Editor for the magazine. I have known Jerry since I was a boy in high school. He preached for the Augusta Road church in Greenville, SC while my dad preached for the By-Pass church in Union, SC. I attended a Thursday night training school which the Augusta Road church sponsored for several months. Later, while I was in college, I preached one Sunday for the church in Morganton, NC where Jerry and Raymond Climer were serving as ministers. When I moved to Union in 1974 to preach Jerry was preaching in Greer, SC. Our relationship deepened as he became a trusted friend and adviser. Jerry now serves the church in Hendersonville, NC as both preacher and elder. I appreciate his willingness to join me in this enterprise.

Howard Winters published my first article (*A Tribute to Jesse Ham, Sr.*) in the September 1973 issue of **Carolina Christian**. I have written regularly for the magazine ever since. I have been greatly blessed by my relationship with this magazine. It is my hope and prayer that through this ministry I can return the favor and encourage others to greater service in the Kingdom.

Hallelujah! What a Savior!

ONE OF MY FAVORITE HYMNS IS "Hallelujah! What a Savior!" written by Phillip P. Bliss. It rings with praise for the redemptive work of Jesus. It expresses the proper attitude of sinners toward the grace of God: grateful amazement.

Guilty vile and helpless we;
Spotless Lamb of God was He;
"Full atonement!" can it be?
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

We stand incredulous at the foot of the cross and cannot believe what we hear—"Full atonement!" But our ears have not deceived us.

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood, Sealed my pardon with His blood;
Hallelujah! What a Savior!"

Worship is a *celebration* of our salvation in Jesus Christ. It is also a *motivation* to live out our confession. The Psalmist declared, "Let the redeemed of the Lord, say so" (Ps. 107:2). Worship gives us a voice and language with which we can proclaim our relationship with God in Christ.

Worship is also a place where we invite others to share the joy of our salvation. And the *invitation* is to everyone: men, women, girls, boys, rich, poor, black, white, educated, illiterate, cultured, uncouth—"whosover will, let him drink of the water of life freely."

"Man of Sorrows," what a name
For the Son of God who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim!
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Acceptable worship is characterized by celebration, motivation, and invitation that are consistent with the glory of Gospel.

Thanksgiving

OUR NATION HAS AN ANNUAL DAY of Thanksgiving (the fourth Thursday in November). Christians have a weekly "thanksgiving." In 1 Thessalonians 1:2 Paul said "We give thanks...." The Greek word is **eucharistoumen**. In 1 Corinthians 11:24 Paul describes Jesus' actions as the Lord's Supper was insituted "and when he had given thanks...." The Greek word is **eucharistesas**. In each of the these words can seen the root of the verb **eucharisteo** which means thank, give thanks; be thankful, be grateful. The noun is **eucharistia** and means thanksgiving, thanks; gratitiude, thankfulness. Because Jesus gave thanks for the bread and wine at the institution of the Lord's Supper, we sometimes call the Supper the Eucharist.

In a very real way, the church celebrates Thanksgiving each Sunday as we share in the Lord's memorial feast.

The Lord's Supper, because it confronts us with the body and blood of Jesus, serves not only as a constant reminder of the grace we have been given, but also as a regular challenge to remain true to our commitment. That is why God designed the Supper to be a weekly observance.

Enjoy our nation's Thanksgiving; but never neglect the church's Thanksgiving.

Associate Editorial

Bible Study Helps, No. 2

By Jim Mullican

Bible Commentaries

A YOUNG PREACHER, WANTING TO impress the rural congregation with his level of learning and originality of thought, stated several times one Sunday, "Commentators do not agree with me, but I believe...," at which point he would state his views. The next Sunday, a good sister handed him a large paper sack, telling him, "Young man, last week you said common taters didn't agree with you, so I brought you a bag of sweet taters."

Many commentators have written books to express their views, and although they sometimes disagree with one another, they are a valuable study tool for the serious Bible student.

Many different kinds of commentaries are available. In general, a commentary will discuss the message of each Biblical book covered, the author, recipients (in the case of epistles), purpose of the book, and date of writing. It will then proceed verse by verse or section by section to examine what the Biblical text says, explaining obscure words, places, customs, and people. While these comments can be very helpful in understanding the Bible, the student must always keep in mind that he is reading another man's opinion of what the passage means. The commentator may be right or wrong, and much depends on his own theological assumptions. One who believes people still speak in tongues will present a very different discussion of First Corinthians 13 when compared with what one who believes that gift is no longer available would say.

With that word of caution, it may also be said that many denominational writers with conservative attitudes toward the Bible have produced some useful commentaries that have proved helpful to members of the churches of Christ. **Adam Clarke's Commentary on the**

Bible, **Barnes' Notes on the Old and New Testaments**, and the **Pulpit Commentary** have been used by many through the years. William Barclay's **Daily Study Bible** in seventeen volumes provides excellent historical and linguistic background, but Barclay's liberal theology has to be kept in mind. He tries to find a natural explanation for every miracle. Two excellent conservative sets by denominational authors are the **Tyndale Old and New Testament Commentaries** and the **New International Commentaries on the Old and New Testament**, not to be confused with the less useful **New International Bible Commentaries**. Two worthwhile series produced by members of the church of Christ in recent years are the **Living Word Commentaries** by various authors and the commentaries by Burton Coffman. During the past twenty-five years, he has published twelve volumes covering the New Testament and has followed those with another twenty-two volumes covering the Old Testament. Brother Coffman has written the only full-length commentary on the whole Bible by a member of the churches of Christ.

A good set of commentaries can cost anywhere from $200 to $800, depending on where it is bought and which set is bought. Several one-volume, abridged commentaries are also available, ranging in price from $20 to $50. Each has its strengths and weaknesses. For those desiring a good, sound set of commentaries which may not always be as thorough as some but which will also not require as much discrimination when reading, the Gospel Advocate New Testament Commentaries are available for about $165, or individual volumes may be bought for $12.95 each.

Concordances

A CONCORDANCE is probably the most commonly used Bible study help. It is a book which lists some or all of the passages which contain a given word. Many good Bibles have a partial concordance at the back, but these contain only the more common words and more well-known passages. A complete concordance will generally be larger than most Bibles, and will contain 1,000 or more pages.

Cruden's Concordance is one of the most famous, even though it is now more than 250 years old. Alexander Cruden (1699-1770) was emotionally unstable, and was confined to an insane asylum three times during his life. However, much of his time was spent painstakingly reading through the King James Version of the Bible and carefully listing each word and the verses where it occurred. His Concordance contained very few errors or omissions, and after an initially poor reception, became a major tool for Bible study in the English language.

In the late 1800's, there was a renewed emphasis on the Scriptures in their original languages, and two new concordances appeared which were great helps to those with little or no knowledge of Hebrew or Greek. **Young's Analytical Concordance** appeared in 1879 and **Strong's Exhaustive Concordance** was published in 1894. Both list alphabetically the words which appear in the King James Version, giving all the passages where each English word is used. However, they go one step farther in that they differentiate the various Hebrew and Greek words which may be translated by the same English word. Under the English word "love," used as a verb, four different Hebrew words and three Greeks words are listed. This can be important, since the different words in Greek and Hebrew may have different shades of meaning. It is one idea to love God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, and another to love the praises of men more than the praises of God, although the same Greek word is used for both. Consulting the Greek and Hebrew dictionaries in the back of each will also enable the student to find other English translations of the same Greek or Hebrew word. For example, the Greek word PHILEO is translated "love" twenty-two times in the KJV, but three times it is translated

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A Good Question

"Why is it that our kids can't read a Bible in school, but they can in prison?"

– Marshalltown, Times-Republican

"kiss." These two volumes generally cost between $10 and $20 each.

With modern computer technology, all that is necessary to produce a concordance to any particular translation is the appropriate computer program and the time to insert the complete text of any version into the computer. There are now computer-generated concordances for the RSV, NRSV, NIV, and NKJV. Prices range from $6.95 for a paperback copy of **Cruden's Concordance** to around $30 for some of the others in hardback. Anyone seriously interested in Bible study, and especially Bible teaching, needs a good concordance. Next to the Bible, my old copy of **Young's Analytical Concordance** has been my most used book through the years.

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Good News for Bad Times

By Dennis Conner

"B*LESSED BE THE GOD AND FATHER of our lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time"* (1 Pet. 1:3-5, NKJV).

Only a few months from the time Peter penned these words, the Neronian persecution would be unleashed upon the Christians in Rome. Many disciples would lose their lives, including, according to ancient tradition, the apostle Peter himself. Already Peter could see the danger on the horizon. The apostle feared for the safety and spiritual survival of the believers and wanted to encourage them. But what could he say? How would he begin? Certainly not with the bad news of impending persecution and pain, but with something that would instead bolster their faith. How would he begin? With a triumphant burst of praise for God's mercy!

It is fascinating how Peter blends an upbeat mood of hope, optimism and praise with a realistic awareness of approaching suffering. His message in these opening words is that it matters not what we might experience in this life; there is always reason to praise God. In this case the reason was the experience of God's mercy, which Peter saw as the very cause of salvation now and in eternity. This salvation is conceived by Peter as a new birth ("begotten again"). Therein lies the reason for praise. Let God be blessed, for by His abundant mercy we have been born again to...

A Living Hope

IT IS NECESSARY for the believer to be patient in the midst of adversity and suffering, but patience is not enough by itself. There must be a reason for patient endurance, and that reason is the possession of a living hope provided by God in Christ.

Peter's description of hope as living is deliberate; it is set apart from the dead and empty hopes embraced by those in the world. It is a hope that lives because it is grounded in the Christ who lives! The believer's hope is grounded in the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The Christian faith is a historical faith, embracing the truth that God has broken through and acted in history in the resurrection of Jesus, thus giving new meaning to every experience in this life. Christ lives, and because Christ lives we do and ever shall live with Him. And knowing this, the Christian sees even the darkest experience in a new light—the light of the resurrection glory and the promise it holds out to all who believe.

Peter knew full well the effect this resurrection inspired hope could have on these struggling disciples. His own life was a testimony to its power. There can be little doubt that as his pen scratched across the parchment his mind drifted back to the resurrection morn itself. The events of the cross had left Peter's own misguided hopes crushed by confusion and despair.

He found himself huddled with what was left of the band of disciples, afraid, bewildered, desperate. Then the message came to the apostles, "The Lord is risen!" Not knowing what to believe, Peter raced to the tomb. The stone had been rolled away. With a mixture of caution and expectation Peter looked inside, and what he saw at that moment forever changed his life. What he saw...was nothing. The Lord was not there. Hope sprang to life in Peter's heart. Yes, blessed be God who has begotten us again to a living hope. In that hope there would be found the strength to endure the present distress. It would strengthen them, for it had strengthened him. So it is, then, that hope lives and imparts life to those who embrace it. Hope created by and grounded in the resurrection of Christ will never die, and neither will those who trust in it.

But what is it, exactly, that struggling believers hope for? Deliverance from present suffering? The avoidance of persecution? The absence of anxiety? All of these hopes are well and good, but they are anchored in the here and now. Peter points his readers to a hope that transcends history and time. God in mercy has begotten us to a living hope that has as its object and substance...

A Permanent Inheritance

"INHERITANCE" is a word with a rich history in Scripture. It is used in the Old Testament in reference to Canaan, the land of promise. Canaan was the inheritance God promised, and delivered, to His people. Christians have their own Canaan. They have heaven waiting for them, and it will be theirs if they will patiently endure.

And what a glorious inheritance it will be. It can never be ruined or destroyed, for it is incorruptible. It can never be stained or spoiled by sin or imperfection, for it is undefiled. And it can never grow old or wear out, for it is unfading and eternal. It is something worth living, suffering, and dying for.

Have you ever made a trip to somewhere, only to find that the motel room you thought you were going to be staying in had been given to someone else, or that some other mistake had been made? Well, there will be no glitches in heaven. Peter says that the believer's place is already reserved. Were some of the suffering disciples of Peter's day concerned that they would not make it to heaven? Don't you worry about that, too? Peter anticipates that concern by offering the assurance that "you...are kept by the power of God through faith." The heavenly reservation is made for all those who are kept by God's power. The word "kept" is a military term. The gist of it is that God stands as a sentinel over us, keeping watch and guarding us. In other words, God will do everything He can to see that we get to heaven. The Christian does not make the journey alone, or even by his own power alone. Faith brings him under the watchful eye and protective hand of God. Sufferings will come. It may very well be that God will not save the believer from them, but He will save and keep the believer in the midst of them.

Yes, let God be praised. In wondrous mercy He has renewed our lives and given us a hope that lives. It is a hope that is infinitely superior to the pitiful hopes of the man in the world. It is there, waiting for us, and it will be ours. As James Gray has expressed it in one of his songs, "Who can mind the journey when the road leads home?"

Dennis is Chairman of the Board of Directors of Carolina Christian Publications, Inc. He has served the Yadkinville church for thirteen years. Contact him at PO Box 1219, Yadkinville, NC 27055.

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Editor's Note: *Robert O. Loftis, of Hayesville, NC, a long-time subscriber to* **Carolina Christian** *submitted the following editorial from* ***Christian Life*** *a bulletin published by Christian Home and Bible School in Mount Dora, Florida. Cletus Stutzman is the editor of* ***Christian Life*** *and he writes of a recent visit with Carl McLeod, a graduate of Christian Home and Bible School and the preaching minister for the church in Hayesville. Brother Stutzman has graciously granted us permission to publish his editorial.*

The Power To See It Through

By Cletus Stutzman

WHY ARE SOME ABLE TO SEE THEIR difficulties through and others are not? Why are some of us able to overcome the adversities of life and others of us are not?

Some of us become better people, more productive and happier following a series of trials and difficulties. Why does this occur in the lives of some and not others? Are some of us favored by providence over others? Is their staying power due to the luck of the draw or a lottery? Or, is their possession of the power to see it through the result of special attributes of character and attitude?

The answers to these questions are discovered by observing carefully the lives of those who have demonstrated the power to see it through. One current example is that of a young minister, Carl McLeod, of Hayesville, NC, a 1973 graduate of Christian Home and Bible School. Because of a brain tumor, he has now become totally blind. Our recent visit with him is reflected in the following observations:

We could not believe our eyes,
But he could not see with his.
We saw the natural beauty of the Smokies and the Blue Ridge Mountains
But he could only see through the image of his memory the awesome beauty which surrounded him.
The expansive accomodations of his home caught our immediate attention,
But though he could not see, he knew every nook and cranny of the place where he lived.
We may readily read the Word of God and feast our eyes on its blessed lines of truth
But he must read through touch and sound.
We quickly forget what we hear and see,
But he easily memorizes everything he hears—more than 300 sermons and 400 songs in three years.
At the onset of his blindness,
he announced his resignation.
But the brethren, from the first to the last, did not see him as blind, but a minister with the heart of God.
We could not believe our eyes that he could not see and yet possess the power to see it through.
How we coveted that power—the power to see it through. To desire it is to possess it.

The power to see it through is activated, first, by a recognition and second, by a decision. That recognition is the acknowledgement of God's enabling power in our lives. Paul declared that God "is **able** to do exceedingly abundantly above all we **ask** or **think**" (Eph. 3:20, emphasis added).

The decision that follows is one of determination to persevere regardless of the circumstances. It is the resolve to see all things through. It is the attitude—"Whatever, do it anyway!" In the language of Hebrews 12:1, it is "...casting aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us and running with endurance the race that is set before us."

The power is available for all. For all who recognize its source, desire to possess it and go for it. Are you one of those?

Brother Loftis adds "Carl has been with us at Hayesville for 10 years and continues to minister effectively. He has a computer that reads any verse or passage so he continues to study. We are fortunate to have him." We are happy to salute brother McLeod (pronounced MaCloud) and we bid him godspeed in his work for the Lord.

The Thunder of God's Power

By Tim Sensing

JOB REPLIES TO BILDAD IN CHAPTER 26 with a sharp sarcastic rebuke. The basis of Job's rebuke rests on the power of God over creation.

"He spreads out the northern skies over empty space; he suspends the earth over nothing. He wraps up the waters in his clouds, yet the clouds do not burst under their weight. He covers the face of the full moon, spreading his clouds over it. He marks out the horizon on the face of the waters for a boundary between light and darkness. The pillars of the heavens quake, aghast at his rebuke. By his power he churned up the sea; by his wisdom he cut Rahab to pieces. By his breath the skies became fair; his hand pierced the gliding serpent" (Job 26:7-13).

You, too, can see the power of God's mighty hand each day in creation. Sunrise and Sunset. The rain falling and the rose unfolding. The awesome might that allows a tornado to send a piece straw into a mighty oak and the gentle nurture of a robin with her young. Job says, "And these are but the outer fringe of his works; how faint the whisper we hear him! Who then can understand the thunder of his power?" (Job 26:14).

Can we know the thunder of God's power or are we destined to be like Job and only hear a faint whisper?

God's thundering power was clearly heard during the historical event of the resurrection. While Jesus lay in the tomb, God exerted his great power in raising Jesus from the dead. The Christian participates in this resurrection at baptism when the old man is put to death and the new man is raised to newness of life. Jesus' resurrection also gives the basis for the hope for our final resurrection. Truly, here is the most thunderous power of God to be demonstrated by him in this world. But is there resurrection power available for me in my daily life after baptism and before his coming again? Paul answers, "YES!"

Paul's clearest statement about resurrection power is found in Philippians 3:8-11. "What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.... I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."

Paul desires to experience resurrection power in his daily life. He realizes that Christ's resurrection is a dynamic force that works in him to cause maturity and ultimately the final resurrection. This power is more than a historical event or an eschatological hope, but also a present active force in his growth as a Christian.

Paul prays for the Ephesians that they might know three things, "...the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come" (Eph. 1:18-21).

The power available to us who believe in the present is the same power demonstrated at the tomb of Jesus. Paul goes on in Ephesians 2 to state that what happened to Christ physically has happened spiritually to those who believe. Christians share in the life of Christ for they

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were made alive with him by resurrection power.

This resurrection power is available throughout our walk. God strengthens us with power through the Holy Spirit in our inner being because Jesus dwells in our hearts through faith (Eph. 3:14-16). We have the power to understand the depths of God's love (Eph. 3:18). God is able to do far abundantly and exceedingly more than we can ask or imagine because of His power at work within us (Eph. 3:20). Therefore, it is possible for us by this power to "live a life worthy of the calling" expounded upon in Ephesians 4-6. Then we will be able to stand in power against the evil one (Eph. 6:10).

In other Pauline letters, these conclusions are verified. He uses similar language in Romans 6 describing baptism as a burial and a resurrection. The Roman Christians should have already known the ethical implications of being baptized into Christ's death. Paul, by necessity, points out again to them that the one buried with Him into death also is raised with Him to live a new life. Death to sin is key to Paul's argument, but it cannot stand alone. Baptism also signifies union with Christ's resurrection. Christians must live in this new life dead to sin and living for God since they are "in Christ" who himself "lives to God."

The power of Christ's resurrection operates in the life of the Christian's past, present, and future. God's resurrection power thunders in the lives of those who believe.

"Christ is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. To be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you" (2 Cor. 13:3-4).

Dr. Tim Sensing, Mebane Street Church of Christ, P.O. Box 1861, Burlington, NC 27216-1861.

A Trip to Troas

By Walter Wagner

IT IS EASY TO LOCATE WHERE THE HOLY Spirit spoke to Paul when he was in the province of Mysia while on his second missionary. The present road (Hwy 210) still follows the same east-west route in most places along the ridge which also runs east-to-west. Since Paul had already passed through Galatia and Phrygia (Acts 16:6,7) we will begin our journey on the ridge road near the border between old Mysia and Phyrgia. The elevation is about 6,000 feet above sea level. As we travel westward the ridge and the road vary in elevation from 3,000 to 6,000 feet above sea level. For a first-century traveller like Paul, it would be tempting to fet off this up and down ridge and enter one of the valleys on either side of the ridge. The valleys lead north to Bithynia and south to Asia. However, the Holy Spirit "suffered them not" to go into these provinces (Acts 16:7). We, too, will continue westward.

After approxiamately twenty miles, the ridge makes a "Y" with one side going northwest to the Bysporus and the other going southwest to the cliff above Assos (Acts 20:13). Before us is a twisting valley containing a stream that flows westward to the Agean Sea. Any traveller, at any time, must take the twisting that runs through this valley in order to reach the Agean Sea and the city of Troas.

At the modern town of E-zi-ne the steeper hills give way to grassy ridges much like the Blue Grass section of Kentucky. Since the modern road goes over these lower ridges, instead of following the valleys, we know we have lost the route taken by Paul and the early disciples. We need to locate an ancient spring.

The farming village of Hi-sar-lik, with its narrow streets, has a warm water spring that the people said "was here before man came here." About three miles to the west we find another spring which has three ancient columns half buried in the ground. The columns have two arches over them. Since Asia Minor is volcanic all springs have a water temperature that ranges from lukewarm upwards to 120 degrees. In the first century the caretaker of the spring would let the containers of water hang under the arches over night in order to cool. This would give the weary traveller cool water the next day. We have again found the path taken by Paul.

The vast blue-green Agean Sea grabs your attention before you notice the unexcavated ruins of Troas. The driver has stopped the bus at the southeast corner of the city wall. An uneven column, twelve feet high, is in the corner where the southern and eastern walls came together. It stands with the stones extending both ways as if it were trying to gueard the ridges of rubble that were once two walls. To the south is a rugged half-saucer shaped depression that was once the Roman theater. A row of greener grass in a long shallow depression marks the place of the ancient aquaduct.

As we walk northward along the rubble that was once the east wall we see two eight foot square guard towers standing out of the rubble. These towers rising twelve feet into the air and standing sixteen feet apart once guarded the east gate of Troas. This is the gate that faces Mysia and the gate that Paul went through as he entered the city (Acts 16:8).

The gate area is recessed; that is, it begins at the inner side of the two guard towers. From one tower a wall two feet wide extends toward a similar wall extending from the other tower. Although they are no longer complete, they were twelve feet high and left a space twelve feet wide for the eastern gate to Troas.

There is a ribbon of stone above our heads extending from one wall to the other. This ribbon of stone is twelve feet long and arches six feet into the air above either end. These unmortared stones form an arch that still overlooks the rubble of what was once Troas. This arch has remained intact through the warfare that removed the other city walls, through earthquakes, and through the ravages of time. We are amazed at their ability to stand although the remainder of the stone wall fallen. The stones remain in place because they are wedge-shaped and are all alike. They are held in place by their own shape and weight, forming an arch that seems to defy the law of gravity as it defied the Ottoman war machinery.

About six feet through this gate are the remains of another wall that would force the traveller to turn to either the right or left. On either side was another gate, but these were only six feet wide. There are also two ribbons of stone that remain arched over these gates to this day. They are six feet long and arch into the air three feet above either end. They, too, seem to defy the law of gravity because the wall between them was destroyed more than 1,000 years ago.

As was true with most ancient cities the public rooms (or, hotel rooms) were just inside the city gate. If Paul and the other disciples did not find a Christian home for his first night's rest we now know where he recieved the vision of a man from Macedonia saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us" (Acts 16:19).

As we walk westward toward the Agean gate we see many foundations of homes where the disciples could have been when they took the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). All that remains of Agean gatem where Paul sailed for Macedonia, is the base of the guard towers and some steps leading down to the sea.

The once faithful church at Troas was already in apostasy when the Seljuk and Ottoman Turks slammed their war machinery against the city in the tenth century A.D. This was also true of all the churches of Asia Minor.

As we return to the east gate we look once more at that cold, dead, and mindless stone arch suspended above our heads. It has been battered in places but it stood and still stands where the Lord's church has failed. It stood and stands because of the way it was made. But what about the Lord's church? They should have remained one with each other and with Christ (John 17:20). They should have remained of the same mind (1 Cor. 1:10). That mind should have been the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16). Like this stone arch they should have remained fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplied (Eph. 4:16). They should have remained living stones (1 Pet. 2:5).

As our bus goes eastward the dust of the road blots from view what is left of the city of Troas. The city that was a site for an example of the time for taking of the Lord Supper also

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provides an example of why we should stand, and stand some more. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith..." (1 Cor. 16:13). "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:11).

How can we expect the Lord to give us a home in heaven if we cannot do what mindless ribbons of stone can do? Keep yourselves in the love of God as commanded in Jude 21.

Walter Wagner has led tours to the Bible Lands and has developed lessons based on the history and archeology of Bible cities and places. Contact him at Box 152, Slater, SC 29683.

The Right Word

God Is Love

By Jim Albright

THE CHACOBO INDIANS OF NORTHERN Bolivia have a peculiar way-at least to the minds of English speakers-of declaring ownership. A man known for his running ability is called *habati ib,* "an owner of running." Likewise, a murderer is called *ati hibo*, "an owner of killing." Thus, being an "owner" of something signifies that a person has special ability in a certain activity.

Linguists Gilbert and Marian Prost used this phrase to introduce new concepts from Scripture. A "priest" became "an owner of worship." But how would they express "God is love" since in the framework of the Chacobo language "love" is always a verb and cannot meaningfully correspond with a noun? They simply used the "ownership" pattern. "God is love" became "God is an owner of loving." The Chacobos interpret this to mean "God is an expert at loving!" (Quoted from **Searchlight on Words**, ©1972 by The Zondervan Corporation, used by permission.)

The New Testament was published in 1979 for the 250 speakers of Chacobo. Many think that Bolivia is a Spanish-speaking country. That is partially true. About a third of the population speak Spanish, the rest speak Indian languages. Wycliffe and others have completed the Bible translation task in Bolivia. Translators have moved on to other countries to help complete the worldwide task of Bible translation.

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Salvation

WHEN WORKING on Bible translation, it is difficult to find just the right words to express important Biblical concepts, such as "grace," "love," and "salvation." Ed and Sally Koehn, Wycliffe translators for the Apalaí people, tell of an interesting experience that God used to provide the right word for "salvation." Sally had been called to help an Apalaí woman who had been in labor for four days. When she arrived, the baby had been born but was lying on the ground, bleeding from the umbilical cord. The mother was lying in a hammock under a mosquito net. Sally quickly tied the cord and wrapped the baby in blankets. She held him for a long time, watching as his color slowly returned. When he appeared to be out of danger, she handed him to his mother and said, "Here's your baby. Put out your arms, and take your baby." There was no response, so she persisted. "Don't you want your baby? Here's your baby. Put out your arms, and take your baby. Here's your baby." Then the mother slowly lifted the net and took the baby.

That morning when Sally returned to her own village, the Indian lady who had accompanied her told all the other women in the village what had happened. Sally wondered if she had done something wrong.

About six years later, one of the women pointed out the child and said to Sally, "You see little Trinidade over there? Do you remember when he was born? If you hadn't lifted him up, he would have been left to die. His mother didn't want him. She had had a long, hard labor, and her husband was far away working. But you picked him up, and that's why he's alive today."

Sally and Ed realized that God had given them the term for "salvation." *Tanÿse* means "lifted-up one." When an Apalaí baby is born, it is either "lifted up" to live or allowed to die. (This anecdote is quoted from a 1989 newsletter of Wycliffe members Dave and Jan Harthan.)

The Apalaí people, who number 450 in 20 villages, live a simple life style in the Amazon rain forest of Brazil. The New Testament is published now and there are about 50 "lifted up" believers.Do you know someone who needs to be "lifted up?"

Jim & Barbe Albright currently work at the Wycliffe-JAARS Center in Waxhaw, NC. They are available to tell more about Bible translation to your church or small group. Call (704) 843-2040.

The Wedding Ceremony

By Paul Jarrett

DAVE RICKELTON, AN ELDER IN THE Archdale church, has observed that he has never heard anyone tie the knot tighter than I do when performing a wedding ceremony. I guess I learned that from my father who often said, "When I perform a wedding I tie a slip knot which assures that the harder they pull against it, the tighter it gets." Since marriage vows are being taken lightly by so many, I believe a description of the wedding ceremony I regularly use to tie the knot tightly will be helpful.

I begin a wedding by reminding the couple in whose presence they are standing to make their pledge of love and commitment. Family and friends are present, and their words are spoken to each other, but the one witness to their wedding whose presence truly counts is God.

If they only wish to pledge their love to each other they could do that privately. If they only want to inform their family and friends of their love they could do that at anytime or any place where they might gather. If they only wish to satisfy the laws of the State they could go to the courthouse and stand before a civil magistrate. I want them to know that if they are exchanging wedding vows in my presence as a minister of the gospel, they are making those vows to God.

With that thought firmly planted in their minds I open with prayer asking God's blessings on the events about to transpire. I then direct them to God's word for His counsel regarding marriage and how they are to conduct themselves as husband and wife.

I encourage them to consider God's original intent for marriage. According to the Genesis account of the origin of this oldest of two Divine institutions (the other being the church), God created marriage because, in His infinite wisdom, He saw that it is not good for man to be alone. Hence, He made woman as a helper suitable to him.

The woman was created from a rib taken from the side of man. Consequently, she and the man are one flesh. She was not made from his head to rule over him; nor from his feet to be trampled on by him. Instead, she was made to walk side by side with him. She was made from a place near his heart to be loved by him, and from under his arm to be protected by him.

God's intention from the beginning was that husband and wife be together forever. Later, as a consequence of sin, marriage could be severed by death, or by adultery which violates the one-flesh nature of the relationship.

There is no example of an approved "marriage ceremony" in Scripture (laying to rest the romantic notion that marriages are "made in heaven"), but God's word does give clear instruction as to how those who know Him are to conduct themselves as husband and wife. They are to be firmly committed to maintaining their marriage "till death do us part." This is not an easy thing to do (in fact, I believe from my own observations, and from Romans 8:7,8, that we should not be surprised when those whose minds are fleshly and not spiritual violate God's wishes for marriage since they "cannot please God"). In order to fulfill God's desire for marriage we must have minds which are "set on the Spirit" (cf. Rom. 8).

To have a mind "set on the Spirit" is to have a willingness to conform to His will as communicated through His word. With that in view I read from Ephesians 5:21-33. I begin with verse 21 because it serves to reinforce my position that the secret to staying married is found in a willingness on the part of both the husband and wife, individually and unilaterally, to submit themselves to the will of God. When they do that they will then "be subject to one another in the fear of Christ."

My comments to the wife-to-be focus on what Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:22-24. I note first that God has given headship in marriage to the husband. This is consistent with the order of creation and the fact that the woman originated from and was created for the man (1 Cor. 11:8,9; 1 Tim. 2:13). However, it is also attributable, in part, to the woman's having been deceived into rejecting God's rule and taking the initiative in sin which resulted in God ordaining that as a consequence of her sin her husband would rule over her (cf. Gen. 3:16ff).

I am quick to point out here that the leadership of the man serves a practical purpose since it would be difficult for any relationship to survive without some delegation of authority. Furthermore, the woman should not see the subjection which God asks of her in negative terms. This is the case for two reasons. First, there is no indication anywhere in Scripture that women is inferior to men. While men and women may have different functions and strengths, women enjoy equality with men in that they are also made in God's image and are joint-heirs with men in Christ (cf. Gal. 3:26-29; 1 Pet. 5:7).

Those who interpret Peter's reference to the woman as a "weaker vessel" to mean that she is somehow less capable intellectually, emotionally, physically, or spiritually than the man do a disservice to the text and display a woeful degree of ignorance regarding the comparative strength displayed by women in all of these areas. (Note: while men may exhibit greater brute strength than women, in terms of overall health and in terms of being able to exhibit strength in such feminine areas as childbirth, women cannot honestly be said to be physically weaker than men.)

I believe the real meaning of the term "weaker," as used by Peter, pertains to her God-given role in the marital relationship. She is called upon by God to assume the servant role. This leads to my second observation to the wife-to-be. I emphasize that in the spiritual realm Jesus equated service with true greatness (Matt. 20:25-28).

The wife who shows respect for her husband and serves the needs of her household manifests the kind of character that is highly praised in Solomon's tribute to the excellent wife (Prov. 31:10-31). Rather than viewing her submission as degrading, the godly wife recognizes that it is through such humble service to her husband that she achieves the lofty status Paul ascribed to women when he wrote, "the woman is the glory of the man" (1 Cor. 11:7).

My comments to the husband-to-be focus on Paul's words in Ephesians 5:25-31. I begin by pointing out that the headship man is to exercise is not to be patterned after the dictatorial, autocratic models of worldly leaders. Rather, the man is to pattern his headship after that of Christ as seen in His headship over the church.

Christ's headship was characterized more by loving service than it was by authoritarian rule. Christ's ultimate service to the church is seen in His death on the cross (cf. Eph. 5:25; Acts 20:28; Matt. 20:28). However, Christ's service also is seen in His willingness to perform the menial task of washing His disciple's feet (John 13:1-17). The man who claims to be above helping his wife with household tasks because he is "the lord of the house" needs to take another look at the Lordship of Jesus.

As a head like Christ husbands are priests

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as well as kings in their households. The man who is a head like Christ will pray for his wife and will seek to nurture her in the Lord. Using Paul's other analogy he will care for her with the same kind of care that he has for his own body, since that is what she is—they are "one flesh." The husband who abuses his wife by failing to either nourish or cherish her has failed the test of headship.

I close my comments to the husband by noting that the father of his bride has given her to him to be loved and cared for just as Christ loves and cares for the church. In order for him to exercise this responsibility he must be able to first care for himself. He must leave his own father and mother and cleave to his wife so that the two might become one flesh—a family of their own.

Finally, I remind the husband that if he loves his wife as Christ loved the church she will respect him. I remind the wife that if she respectfully serves the needs of her husband he will love her. I remind both of them that the vows they are about to exchange are made not only to each other, but, most importantly, to God. Therefore, if they each determine to submit to one another in accordance with God's will, in the fear of Christ, God will bless their union.

The vows that I have the husband and wife say are quite traditional. While I offer them the opportunity, during pre-marital counseling, to write their own vows, I must confess that I am strongly inclined to favor the traditional wedding vows. The vows I have both make are as follows:

> *I, (Name), take you (Name) to be my lawfully wedded (Husband/Wife). To live together after God's ordinances; to love and cherish; honor and (respect/nurture); in sickness and in health; in prosperity and adversity; so long as we both shall live.*

In the course of pre-marital counseling I discuss the significance of these vows. I call attention to the importance of truly "living together after God's ordinances." This reference is not just to the need to **stay together**, but to truly abide by God's instructions (e.g. Eph. 5:21-33). Also, I remind them that the importance of manifesting the character of Christ in their lives which compliance with God's ordinances produces when fully embraced cannot be overstated.

Next I like to note the importance of not overlooking the threat that "health" and "prosperity" can pose to marriage. While we anticipate that "sickness" and "adversity" will place a strain on a marriage, such is not always the case. In many instances sickness and adversity will draw a couple closer together. On the other hand "health" and "prosperity" can foster a spirit of independence that divides them. Couples would do well to note that the "thorns" that choked out the good seed in the parable of the sower represented "riches and pleasure of this life" as well as "worries" (Luke 8:14).

After both husband and wife repeat their vows of love and commitment, I say something I borrowed from a fellow minister. I turn to the one who has heard his/her spouse-to-be's vows and ask:

> *Do you accept (Name)'s vow of love and commitment?*

The reason for asking this question will become apparent below.

Following the exchange and acceptance of vows, I take a moment to emphasize the significance of vows and the importance of keeping them. I refer to Solomon's words in Ecclesiastes 5:5: "It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay." I then cite Psalm 15:1-5 where David includes among those who will dwell with God the one who "swears to his own hurt and does not change." I encourage them to realize that it may not always be easy to keep the vows they have made. However, I assure them that if they persevere in keeping their vows, even when things are rough, they will achieve a degree of love and fulfillment that can never be realized in a series of casual relationships.

At this point I suggest that there are three emotions present in each of their hearts: faith, hope, and love. It is important that these three emotions be nurtured in their relationship as husband and wife throughout their life together.

Faith is demonstrated by their acceptance of each other's vows of love and commitment. As important as it is for each of them to keep the vows they have made, it is equally important that they believe that their spouse is making a sincere effort to keep their vows.

In marriage counseling I have learned that one often loses faith in their spouse's love for them before he or she loses confidence in their own efforts to make the marriage work. While we should never give our spouse reason to doubt us, we must also be aware that faith in our spouse must, to some degree, originate from within us. It is possible to doubt when there is no real reason to doubt if we do not believe in our mate.

Hope is evidenced in the decision the couple has made to wed. They have chosen to become husband and wife in the sincere hope that the joys of life will be increased and the trials of life will be more easily endured if they can be shared.

Again, marriage counseling tells me that marriages often fail when one or both parties in the relationship loses hope. You hear them say regarding problems in their marriage, "It's always been this way. It's never going to get any better. There's nothing for us to do but divorce." The underlying message in these words is the loss of hope. It is important for a couple to never lose hope that whatever troubles they may be experiencing will either pass or be overcome.

I trust that the final emotion that would be evident at every wedding is love. Ideally this emotion is present in all of its glorious forms. Love is seen in the romance and the sexual attraction that has brought the bride and groom together. It is important that the romance not end with the wedding and the honeymoon. Husbands and wives need to be encouraged to continue to date and to romance each other. They need to enjoy the sexual relationship which God created and said was good and honorable in the context of marriage (Heb. 13:4). As the years pass they need to continue to find exhilaration in each other's arms (cf. Prov. 5:15-19; Song of Sol. 7:10).

Love is also present on the wedding day in the form of friendship. It is often observed that the husband and wife need to be best friends. They need to be friends as well as lovers. A marriage is in serious trouble when either the husband or the wife begins to enjoy time spent with other friends more than they enjoy time spent with the mate who should be their best friend. In pre-marital counseling I tell couples that "the couple that *stays together* ***Stays Together***." The greater the number of activities from which a couple derives mutual, shared pleasure has a direct relationship to the strength of their marriage.

Love is also present in the form of loyalty. This loyalty is seen in the exchange of vows. It is important that the couple remain loyal to each other. They need to avoid falling into the trap of being critical of their spouse even if they see it as "constructive criticism." Rather than *nagging* one another into making changes they would do well to try *bragging* one another into being better than they are. They need to be each other's most loyal fan and supporter.

The most important form of love that should be present on the wedding day and maintained throughout the marriage is the kind identified with the Greek word **agape**. It is the love Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. This text is the second of two texts (the other being Ephesians 5:21-33) which I read in the course of the marriage ceremony.

I preface my reading of this text by encouraging the bride and groom to manifest the char-

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acteristics described in this text in their treatment of their spouse. In fact, in pre-marital counseling I encourage each of them to read the following text inserting their own names where the word love appears.

> *Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails" (1 Cor. 13:4-8a).*

Following this reading I encourage both the husband and the wife to always seek to trust each other in the loving manner described by Paul. If they determine to maintain the faith, hope, and love present on their wedding day throughout their life together as husband and wife then their marriage, like the love which binds them together, will not fail.

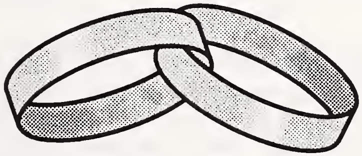
At this point I ask each in turn if they have a "token of their love" (i.e., a ring). Regarding the ring which the woman places on her husband's hand, I call attention to the purity of the metal. I enjoin her to maintain the purity of the marital union so that when her husband is away from her the ring on his finger will remind him that he has a wife who keeps herself for him and him alone. As she places the ring on his finger I ask her to repeat these words:

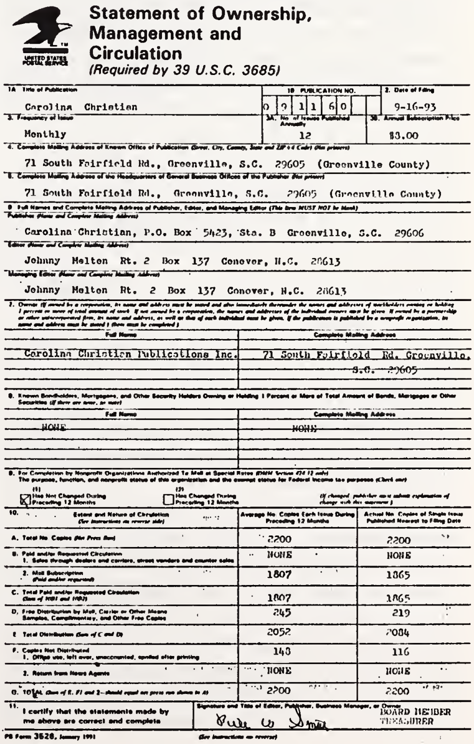
> *With this ring, I thee wed, promising to keep myself, to thee and thee alone, so long a we both shall live.*

Prior to the husband placing the ring on his bride's finger and repeating these same words, I observe that it, too, is of purest metal which is indicative of the fact that God recognizes no double standard in marriage. The purity He expects of the wife is also expected of the husband.

I also observe that both the ring he has received from his wife and the ring he is about to place on her finger are circular in form. This circular form is symbolic of the unending nature of the love that binds them together. When his wife is separated from him the ring on her finger needs to remind her of the fact that she has a husband who has an undying love for her. He should never give her cause to think otherwise.

Following this exchange of vows and tokens of love and commitment, I conclude by pronouncing them husband and wife and leading the congregation in prayer. In that closing prayer I ask God's blessing upon the newlyweds. I also ask that not only would they be a blessing to each other but that they also be a blessing to others by means of their example. I pray that any children born into this new home would be raised in a home filled with love. I pray that all those present would do all within their





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power to encourage this couple to keep their vows.

Finally, I pray that those already wed have had their own marriages strengthened by being reminded once more of the significance of the vows once made and the rings once exchanged. It is the same prayer that I offer in making this account of my wedding ceremony available. I pray that those who read it will have their marriages strengthened as a result. Marriage is not easy, but divorce is even harder. For that reason I leave this final word of exhortation:

> *Good understanding produces favor, but the way of the treacherous is hard (Prov. 13:15).*

Paul performs wedding ceremonies as a minister of the gospel in Charlotte, NC. Contact him at PO Box 241002, Charlotte, NC 28224.

The Father's Arms

By Bruce Thweatt

UNION STATION IS A HOTEL NOW, BUT it used to be a train station. A busy station at that, with trains connecting for north and south, east and west, rolling in and rolling out. Now people sit at little tables set for atmosphere where others used to run loaded down with bags and babies, hustling to catch the train. I remember Union Station when the trains still ran; I'm old enough, barely. I remember mostly that the ceiling was way up there, higher than the clouds it seemed to me. Even perched securely in Pop's arms, held on those tall broad shoulders, that ceiling was way up there! A six year old could get lost in all that empty space up there, at least that's what I thought then. It would have been a frightening thought, except I was held nice and tight in Pop's arms. It could have been scary anyway, to be there about to climb on a train going somewhere far away, somewhere that you didn't know for sure was real. But, you can't be all that frightened when you're in Pop's arms, besides the journey of several days to far off San Francisco, was an adventure to be savored. It was a chance to live one of the exciting stories that people lived on the television that you got to see sometimes when you visited somebody who had everything.

Isn't that the way it is when we rush off to experience life, if we are held in the Father's arms? The adventure of a lifetime (no pun, literal usage intended), every moment as unique as a snowflake, every encounter with the new and unknown an opportunity to live life to the full, as long as we are held tight in the Father's hands! Is it possible that life becomes a burden only when we no longer see ourselves wrapped in the arms of a loving Father? Isn't it possible that our own sense of maturity, our own assumption of adulthood is in fact what leaves us without the reassuring touch of the Father's hands? Perhaps we should understand Jesus' admonition about the little children owning the kingdom of God more literally! "I tell you that whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will not enter it at all!"(Luke 18:17, **Jewish New Testament**, translated by David H. Stern, Jewish New Testament Publications, P.O. Box 1313, Clarksville, Maryland, pg. 105.) Just as a child can face life, even the unknown without fear, because of the confidence of trust in its parents, so is it necessary to enter God's kingdom with a childlike trust. Grown ups have an extraordinarily difficult time recapturing childlike trust, yet that is the requirement Jesus stipulated for anyone to enter the Kingdom of God.

Let me tell you more about Union Station and beyond. We were leaving Nashville to go to San Francisco. We would spend more than two days in travel to reach the cable car capital. I don't remember any cable cars. I don't even remember the train ride. It must have been dull. Fortunately for my sense of adventure, San Francisco was not the end of the line! We were only going there to embark on a freighter that would carry us across the Pacific to the beautiful island of Formosa. Yes, we called it Formosa right up until we got there and discovered the people who lived there for the past two or three thousand years called it Taiwan, and weren't much impressed with the Portuguese tourists who called it something else! Officially, it was and is The Republic of China, but this isn't a political essay, so other than taking a slow boat to China (28 days on board), the official name didn't matter. There were seven of us making the trip, Dad and Mom, and five kids age 9 and down. Except for Mom who can get seasick watching Carnival Cruise Line commercials, we were all excited about going on a big boat! We weren't even smart enough to be scared when we had to ride out typhoons! Kids always like roller coaster rides, I guess! Not even being one of two missionary families in the city of Taipei bothered us kids. Having to learn to speak another language wasn't all that bad, I only hid under the bed once until he gave up and went away! You learn a lot fairly easily when every kid in the street speaks the other language. No, we kids weren't scared to go, on the train, on the ship, through the typhoons, into Taipei, we had a father and mother we trusted. We thought life was one big adventure, and like all good movies (Disney, with subtitles), we knew the ending would come out right! But ask me to move there today...I'd like to, you know, really! I still think of it as home. I can even still say good morning and how are you, and the egg rolls were really good! My neighbors today are from Taiwan (small world)? and they are too polite to tell me how bad my Mandarin is, but as soon as they get past hello, what's happening, I start to sweat! Still I'd love to go back. But it would be scary. I'm all grown up now. I'm the Dad! I'm the one with responsibilities. I have obligations. But don't you have faith? Don't you trust God to take care of you? Yes, but...it's not so easy when you're all grown up. That's what Jesus must have been thinking of when He told us that we needed to become like little children to enter His kingdom. How many times I've needed the feeling I had so long ago when Pop was carrying me to the train. What got in the way? Pop wasn't superman; he was just Mom's father. He couldn't wave a magic wand and change the world, but I trusted him to keep that from ever being needed. How much brighter and clearer our faith could shine in our own lives if we could just turn loose of "I can do it myself" and become little children in God's arms. Don't you love it when Jesus fussed at the disciples for cutting the kids off before they got to Him? "Let the children come to me and stop hindering them, because the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these."(Ibid, pg. 105.) I'm jealous of those kids, and I don't even know their names. Because for just a moment, one unforgettable moment, they were held in the Father's arms.

Bruce serves the Westside church in Rocky Mount. Contact him at PO Box 8619, Rocky Mount NC 27804.

Brotherhood News

By Michael R. Mobley

WASHINGTON, NC...The River Road church announces that Harvey Allen, formerly of South Carolina, is currently preaching for them. They also announce that Johnny Melton will be conducting a gospel meeting on November 1214. AIKEN, SC...The Whiskey Road congregation announces that Randy Gore is their new youth minister and will begin a campus ministry at the University of South Carolina at Aiken. HENDERSONVILLE, NC...Jerry Senn, minister for the church, announces that they have appointed five new deacons: Tom Bullard, Floyd Loudermilk, Andy Newberry, Bill Sink, and Jerry Whitted. They were presented to the congregation on October 10 and bring the number of deacons to 12 for the congregation. HURST, TX...The Brown Trail church produces a weekly television program entitled "The Truth in Love." The featured speakers are Johnny Ramsey and Dave Miller. There have been several guest speakers, including: Hugo McCord, Willard Collins, Hardeman Nichols, Perry Cotham, Earl West, Thomas Warren, and many others. Some of their most requested programs are "God and Human Sexuality," "Must the Church Change?" and "Questions People Ask About Christianity." The program is seen on more than 400 cable systems in 23 states.If you would like to see a sample video, contact the church at PO Box 865, Hurst, TX 76053.

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50th Annual

Carolina Lectureship

Hosted by:
Hickory Church of Christ
Hickory, NC

Date:
April 4–7, 1994

Theme:
Freedom In Christ
An Exposition of Galatians

Featured Speaker:
C. W. Bradley, Memphis, TN

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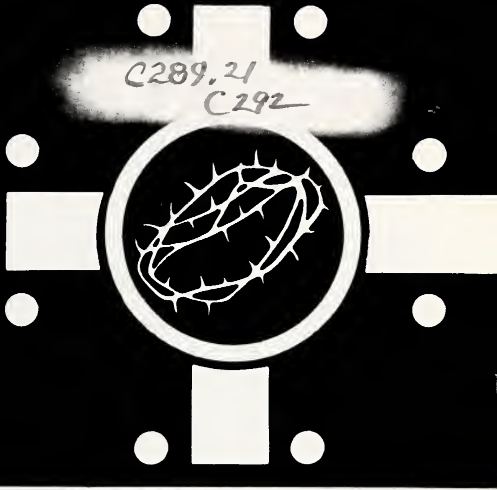

"The Word of God,
Jesus Christ, on
account of his great
love for mankind,
became what we are
in order to make
us what he is himself."
– Irenaeus

Carolina Christian

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN (ISSN 0008-672X)
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Editorial

By Johnny R. Melton

"THERE WAS POWER IN THAT room!" That was a comment made to me more than once concerning the first annual Church Leadership Seminar which convened last October.

The Seminar was successful because Charles Siburt effectively presented useful material on a timely subject (leading the church through times of conflict). But the real success of the Seminar was that it brought together 100 elders, deacons, preachers and other congregational leaders from thirty churches all the way from Charleston, South Carolina to Falls Church, Virginia.

There was, indeed, power in that room. The fellowship that was shared was warm and gracious and encouraging. While the subject matter might suggest fear and frustration, the atmosphere was optimistic and hopeful. The churches in the Carolinas (judging from the participating churches, which ranged in size from 500+ to fewer than 50) are facing these changing times with faith and courage. Rather than weeping and wailing that things are not as they have always been, these church leaders are committed to "leading the church through times conflict" by maintaining an unwavering commitment to Scripture, which doesn't change, while embracing, with "sanctified common sense," those changes that are not a matter of "thus saith the Lord."

The second annual Church Leadership Seminar is scheduled for October 28 and 29, 1994. Plan now to attend.

IRS and the Tripp Fund

A RECENT EDITORIAL NOTE IN **Carolina Christian** stated that the Easley church had established a fund for Jeanette Tripp's medical expenses. Readers were encouraged to make contributions to the fund with checks made to the Easley church and marked for "Jeanette Tripp Fund."

Brother Ernest Taylor in Kernersville, NC was the first to call to my attention the fact that checks so designated would not be allowed as charitable contributions (and thereby tax-deductible) by the IRS. According to the IRS checks made to a church but designated for a specific individual (such as the fund for sister Tripp) are considered to be gifts to the individual, and gifts to individuals are not tax-deductible.

In order for a gift to be tax-deductible, the non-profit organization to which the gift is made must be able to exercise discretion in the use of the funds. Such is not the case when a fund is set up for an individual, monies contributed into the fund, and then all of the monies handed-over to the individual.

Limited direction is permitted for gifts made to charitable organizations. For example, one could make a gift to a church and designate it for the "building fund," or the "benevolence fund," or the "flower fund," or the "missions fund." Such designations are permissible because, even though they restrict the use of the funds to one area of ministry, that ministry is still a function of the church. The problem comes when the gift is restricted to one individual or family.

The Tripps continue to need our prayers and our financial support. Checks made to the Easley church and marked simply "Benevolence" would be tax-deductible, and we are confident that the funds would be used to assist the Tripps with their medical expenses.

Those interested in digging deeper into this matter are directed to IRS Publication 526.

A Call for Unity

THE PSALMIST SANG, "HOW GOOD and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!" Our ambition in the church is to know the pleasure and joy the Psalmist extolled. However, in increasingly diverse groups unity is not something that happens automatically; it must be cultivated.

Paul understood that congregational unity would not just happen. He urged, "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification" (Rom. 14:19). Paul recognized that brethren would have differences of opinion on various matters. He commanded, "So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God" (v. 22a). This admonition does not mean that there was never to be any discussion of the issues over which brethren differed. In this very passage, Paul gave instructions concerning eating meats and keeping holy days—issues over which the Romans were divided. He did not take the position that both sides were right; he explained why one position was right and the other wrong. What he did was to forbid the kind of private discussions of the issues that easily degenerated into gossip, slander, backbiting and backstabbing.

Paul's prayer in this context should be our prayer, "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Jesus Christ, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 15:5,6).

If brotherhood unity is important to us, then we will give heed to Paul's subsequent instruction: "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God" (v. 7).

It is my sincere prayer that our great brotherhood be characterized by a commitment to unity. Let us "accept one another." Let us commit ourselves to God and to the pursuit of His truth. We must not shy away from discussing biblical themes and issues—we insist on proclaiming the whole counsel of God. We must continue to root whatever we do as the people of God in Scripture. Not everyone will agree with everybody on everything; they didn't in the first century, and we won't in twentieth. But, just as the Roman Christians could be united without agreeing on everything, so can we—and with God's help—so will we. ❑

Associate Editorial

Bible Study Helps, No. 3

By Jim Mullican

Word Studies

SINCE GOD CHOSE TO REVEAL HIS word to man in written form, it is important that the written words be understood. Living languages, such as English, are in a constant state of change, so that words may not mean now what they did in the past. Even twenty-five years ago, the "Flintstones" television series had as part of its theme song, "We'll have a gay old time!" In 1968, it meant a happy and carefree attitude; but in 1993, "gay" has come to describe an attitude of rebellion against God's ordained roles for men and women. Needless to say, that word would not be used if the Flintstones were being introduced today.

Words used in the Bible also change in meaning with the passing of time. That's true in our English Bibles. In Luke 6:11 of the King James Version, the scribes and Pharisees are "filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus." Madness today means insanity, but four hundred years ago it meant anger or fury. In 2 Thessalonians 2:7 in the King James Version, Paul writes, "only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way." In modern English, "to let" means "to allow," but four hundred years ago it meant the opposite—to restrain or hold back. This is one of the most extreme examples of a word changing its meaning, but there are many more.

Since the Bible was not originally written in English, one is often at a loss to study word meanings without some reference to the original languages. For the scholar, there are numerous lexicons and other books which require some knowledge of Greek or Hebrew to use. For the average Christian, however, Vines's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words is a great help, and a more recent edition entitled **Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words** is also available. In these volumes, one has only to look up the particular English word as it appears in the King James Version, and all the words with that meaning in English will be listed. For example, if one is interested in the word "madness," he will find under that listing that five different Greek words are translated as "mad" or "madness" in the New Testament. Each is listed, printed in English letters, with the passages where they appear and the precise implications of each word which cause it to differ from the others. The word for "madness" in Luke 6:11 cited above is ANOIA, which "denotes folly...finding its expression in violent rage."

Word studies are not only important to the preacher and Bible class teacher, but to anyone who is serious about understanding the Word of God. These volumes are some of the most reasonably priced study tools. A 1400-page hardback book for $10-$15 is a bargain for anyone, and especially one as worthwhile as this.

Books on History

Some profess to have little interest in history, but if that is so, such a person would also have little interest in the Bible, because it is filled with history. Any subject can be made dry and boring when presented poorly or by one who lacks knowledge or enthusiasm. This includes history, the Bible, or anything else. Those who have little interest in History may simply have never heard it presented well.

The history of the human race begins in the garden of Eden and will conclude with the return of Jesus, at least as far as our activities on this earth are concerned. The people we read about in the Bible were a part of history, and were often shapers of history. Among them were David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander the Great, Caesar Augustus, Nero, Peter, Paul, and Jesus, all of whom are mentioned specifically or alluded to in the Bible. A knowledge of history can clarify many different passages and make them come alive for the reader.

The Old Testament closes with Judea under the control of Persia, but the New Testament opens with the Romans in control and Greek the common language of the east. Only a study of history sheds light on how these changes occurred.

The New Testament knows only the churches of Christ, but in our own time we see hundreds of different churches claiming to follow Jesus. How did this come about? What is the background of churches of Christ today?

Some good books for those who wish to read more would include **The Eternal Kingdom**, by F. W. Mattox (former President of Lubbock Christian College), **The Search for the Ancient Order** (Volumes I, II, III, IV), by Earl West, and **Historical Backgrounds of Bible History**, by Jack Lewis. All these authors are faithful Christians as well as academic scholars.

Remember, all of history is really His story.❑

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Faith Versus Law

By Carl O. Cooper

IN ORDER TO BE JUSTIFIED AND FREE from the guilt of disobedience to law, whether it be the Law of Moses, or any other law, only two ways are possible: (1) Never violate the law, or (2) Pay the penalty.

Since it is not possible to live a life of sinless perfection and never violate any law, we could never hope to attain the first; therefore, the penalty must be paid.

To disobey or to violate a law of God is sin, and we know that the penalty of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). If one paid the penalty for sin it would not warrant salvation: one would still be lost. Therefore, it is not possible to attain salvation by law.

However, since paying the penalty requires the giving of life, perhaps another life could be substituted to pay the price. Blood represents life, (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11), but the problem is to find a life that could be valuable enough to substitute for life of a man. The blood of animals could not take away sin (Heb. 9:11-12; 10:1-4). The life of another man could do the job, but where could one find another man who was without sin and willing to substitute himself in one's place? No one can be found without sin, let alone thousand upon thousands for everyone who desires salvation.

Jesus—God Himself—was the only one free from sin and valuable enough to substitute in a sinner's place to pay the penalty for disobedience to law. And not only for one person, but for all people who have ever lived, and who shall ever live for all time.

When God created Adam and Eve and placed them in the Garden of Eden, they were clean and pure and free from all sin. God walked with them in the garden and Adam and Eve enjoyed a relationship with God that no other human has ever enjoyed since. When Adam introduced sin into the world, he created a serious problem for which there was no simple solution. He was guilty of violating law, and the only way he could ever be justified again and be free from sin was to pay the penalty—and the penalty was death.

God in His infinite wisdom, saw the problem and understood. And from the beginning He had a plan. The only way sinful humans could ever be justified and saved would be for God to pay the penalty Himself on their behalf. This He did by sending His Son.

When Jesus paid the penalty for our sins by sacrificing His blood on the cross, His blood had the power to redeem us from our sins and save our souls from death providing we have the desire to be redeemed. Not everyone has this desire and all will not be saved. God realized that there would be those who could not be saved due to their own wicked condition and designed a plan whereby some could be saved.

The first requirement for salvation is to realize that one is guilty of sin. Some will never come to this realization because they will never hear the gospel. This is unfortunate and is why we must try to get the gospel to all parts of the world. The next requirement is to have a desire for salvation. When this desire leads to a faith that Jesus is the Son of God, and this faith leads to a person being obedient to the instructions (or, laws) God has given, then one will obey God by repenting of one's sins, confessing that Jesus is God's Son, being baptized (immersed) for the remission of sins and one will be saved.

This plan and this forgiveness have been given to us by the grace of God. We did nothing to merit it, God gave it to us from the goodness of His own heart, not because we deserved it. All who are saved are saved by the grace of God.

God allowed another system under the law whereby sins could be rolled forward by making animal sacrifices. This was not a substitute for Christ but was an approved method whereby God would allow a postponement of the penalty until Christ came.

No true justification, in the absolute sense, was ever achieved by any person by obeying the Law of Moses; but, inasmuch as there were countless persons under that system who were saved, a type of justification could be achieved that would allow a person to be in a condition where the blood of Christ could save him.

Of course, like the Christian today, whatever the Jew did in his obedience to the commands of God required faith. To be obedient without faith is never of any value. It was through faith that "Abraham was credited with righteousness" (Rom. 4:9).

God had another system for Gentiles as well. Like the Patriarchs before Moses, the Gentiles were not under the Law of Moses. This does not mean that they did not have any law. God has given instructions to mankind ever since He created Adam. These instructions are commands are law. The Gentiles were under a moral law, even as we are today. If the Patriarchs and the Gentiles had faith in God and demonstrated their faith by trying to be obedient to God, they, too, could be saved.

Before Christ, men were saved by faith. Faith that leads to obedience. We are saved in the same manner today. We are saved by faith. Faith that leads to obedience.

Brother Howard Winters gave an example of how sins were rolled forward for those who lived before Christ. "If I write a check with no money in the bank and the person I give it to agrees to hold the check until money is placed into the bank, then for all practical purposes the bill has been postponed until a genuine payment can be made." God allowed the people before Christ to write a check which he agreed to hold until Christ would come and credit their account.

This is not so today under the Christian system. If we violate a law or command we can have immediate and complete forgiveness and the penalty can be paid in full by the blood of Christ which is continually forgiving us of our sins provided we have faith and meet the other requirements, such as repentance and a heart that intends to be obedient to God.

Our faith saves us as it has always saved people, in response to the grace of God which has always existed on behalf of sinners. We are also saved by works, in that all obedience is works. To have no works is to have no obedience. And to have no obedience is to have no faith.

There is a Law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). To violate this law carries the same penalty of death, for all sin is violation of law (1 John 3:4). Unlike the Law of Moses, where there was no forgiveness, today complete forgiveness is available through Christ.

We know that all sin is a violation of law, "for where no law is, there is no transgression" (Rom. 4:15), and "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of law" (1 John 3:4). Once the will of God has been violated or the law has been transgressed, we become guilty of sin, and the penalty must be paid.

There has never been a time when mankind was without law. Adam transgressed God's law when he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17). The Patriarchs and the Gentiles had the moral law as well as special instructions God gave them as He saw fit. The Jews had the Law of Moses and today we still have the moral law as well as the law of Christ. To transgress any of God's laws carries the same penalty of death. "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10).

The only hope that sinful people have for redemption and salvation from the penalty of these sins is Christ and the sacrifice of His blood. Through the grace of God, people have always been given a way to prepare to receive the salvation from the blood of Christ. The first requirement has always been faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Heb. 11:6). Faith is the most important prerequisite to having our sins forgiven. No matter what we do, without faith it is not acceptable to God.

Faith that leads us into obedience to God's instructions is the type of faith that saves. Works of obedience save us, but not without faith (James 2:21-23). "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:20).

But what is the difference between law and works? Are they the same? This is an area that confuses many people. If we cannot be saved by law, how then can we be saved by works? Works are obedience to law. Disobedience to law produces sin. If a man could perfectly obey law and therefore have perfect works, he would not need salvation, for he would have never sinned. God has always required that salvation be accomplished by works. Could Noah have been saved had he not obeyed God by building the ark (1 Pet. 3:20)? Could Abraham have been saved had he not offered Isaac as a sacrifice as God commanded (James 2:21)? Can we be saved today without obeying God's gospel plan of salvation? God has always required works in order to be saved; but works without faith are useless.

And so it has been the same since the beginning of time, when we sin we disobey law, and there has always been law. Since it has never been possible for people to obey perfectly all of God's laws, then all are guilty of sin. The only way to be cleansed from the guilt of breaking the law is to pay the penalty; but the penalty for sin is death, so it is impossible for a sinner to save himself. The only hope we have to be redeemed from our sins is the blood of Christ. This requires faith. In order to be acceptable to God we first must have faith. Faith that leads us to be obedient to God's instructions. Obedience is works. Just as Noah built the ark because of faith and Abraham offered Isaac because of faith, we obey the gospel because of faith. From the beginning of time people have been saved in the same manner. We sin by disobedience to law and we are saved by both faith and works, and not by "faith alone" (James 2:24). ☐

Carl is a businessman in Winston-Salem. He is a member of the Linville-Forest church. Contact him at 8892 Swallowford Rd., Lewisville, NC 27023.

The Right Word

With

By Jim Albright

IN THE APINAYÉ LANGUAGE, THERE are two words for "with." One implies a casual togetherness, a loose non-committal bond. The other describes a close, committed, sincere togetherness. When translator Pat Ham was translating Matthew 28:20, she knew she needed the correct "with" to accurately quote Christ's words: "I am with you always." The first meaning of "with" would not have portrayed Jesus' closeness to us. It was more fitted to the Apinayé boy who wanted to go to town "with" Pat, not as friend, helper, or protector, but in hopes of Pat buying him an ice cream cone!

The second meaning was the correct choice. Peti, an Apinaéy lady who helps Pat with the translation work, expressed it well. She described how the Apinaéy carry a basket. It rests on the back, with the weight supported by a strap that goes around the forehead. Peti said, "Jesus is just as close as our basket strap." That's real togetherness! (Quoted from a 1990 newsletter of Wycliffe members Dave and Jan Harthan.)

There are 800 Apinaéy in 6 villages in northeast Brazil. Over 90% of the New Testament has been translated in first draft. A small group of 6-12 meets weekly to read Scripture and pray. Two people who come to listen to the Scriptures are Moses, the old witch doctor, and his wife. They come regularly and listen intently. Pray for Moses and his wife, that they will soon "stand up with Jesus." Pray also that as this small group gathers to hear God's Word they will respond in faith and obedience. (**Brazil's Tribes**, 1992)

Isn't it good that we have Christ "with" us always?

Without or Within?

IN CHECKING THROUGH RACHEL Saint's translation of Mark 16 into Auca, Dr. Catherine Peeke noted a seeming inconsistency between verses three and four. "It looked like a typographical error," she said, "for the verb stem which should have expressed 'rolled away' was spelled *pae* in verse 3, but *tae* in verse four."

"Oh," Rachel replied when questioned, "that's no error. It's all in your point of view!" Then she explained to Dr. Peeke that the women at the tomb of Christ, in unbelief and defeat, expected that the stone had to be rolled away by some force from without, but the actual force which rolled the stone away came from within the tomb. "And," she added, "the Auca verb represents a difference in point of view."

(Quoted from **Searchlight on Bible Words**, ©1972 by the Zondervan Corporation, used by permission.)

Formerly called Auca ("savages") by neighboring tribes, now called the Waorani ("the people"), the Waorani number about 800 and live in the jungles of Ecuador. Their New Testament was dedicated in 1993.

Maybe you remember the five men killed by the Aucas in the '50s as they tried to bring God's Word to the Aucas. Nate Saint, Rachel's brother, was one killed. Jim Elliott was another. Jim had written the following in his Bible found with his body: "He is no fool who gives what he can not keep, to gain what he can not lose."

Some think that missionaries are crazy. I guess it's all in your point of view. ❑

Jim & Barbe Albright currently work at the Wycliffe-JAARS Center in Waxhaw, NC. They are available to tell more about Bible translation to your church or small group. Call (704) 843-2040.

Remember Jesus Christ

By Tim Sensing

MEMORY HAS A MIND OF ITS OWN. I have to count on my fingers when I graduated college. Sequences of events in my past are often muddled. But if you ask me what time it is right now, I'll amaze you with the accuracy of my internal clock. For the most part, I keep the schedule for my appointments in my head. Yet, if you ask me about yesterday, I'm already confused.

Paul exhorts Timothy to "remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel" (2 Tim. 2:8). Is not Jesus the one whom Timothy has placed his faith in? Is not Timothy the one who witnessed Paul's stoning in his own hometown, yet still committed himself to the ministry? Is not Jesus the one Timothy preaches about at every opportunity? Then why does Paul instruct Timothy to "remember?"

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Because it is easy to forget. Timothy, remember Jesus Christ. Remember that the one who conquered death through resurrection will "strengthen you" for your task. Just as God was faithful fulfilling the prophecies concerning the Messiah, so shall He be faithful to you. This reminder comes to one in hardship from one who also suffers.

Yet, it is so easy to forget. Jesus lived a long time ago. He is a man of our distant past. We have neither seen Him nor spoken to Him. Without the daily reminder from God's revelation of him, we, too, would forget. If He is out of sight, He is out of mind.

It is easy to allow the concerns of this world to occupy our minds so much that Jesus is shoved to the periphery. Many times, plain and simple, we are too busy to remember. We allow careless, meaningless, and even unwholesome thoughts to dominate our waking hours.

Remembering requires change. If I remember, then I'll need to live differently. Looking unto Jesus demands constant change.

Why does Paul instruct Timothy to "remember"? Because memories are reconstructed. Elizabeth Loftus of the University of Washington, in an article in **Time** magazine, relates the story of a man who remembered graphically the details of his own kidnapping. He remembered facial expressions, events and even conversations with amazing clarity. Only years later did his nurse confess that she took the baby and there had been no attackers and no kidnapping to be remembered.

Loftus concludes—people forget facts. They then fabricate facts to fill in the gaps of true memory. They reconstruct events to accommodate the feelings that are now felt. They honestly believe to be true what their minds have only imagined.

So Timothy, "remember Jesus. This is my gospel." In light of the evidence, the reality, the truth of who Jesus is, Timothy, endure hardship. "And keep reminding them of these things."

How can I remember? Although it has been said many times and in many ways, the basics of Christianity are simple. These disciplines must be incorporated into one's daily life in order for growth to be accomplished. Without these disciplines we will drift, we will wander, and we will forget. Even the strongest will waste away.

Bible study, prayer, worship, fellowship, and service are essential reminders and builders of a true faith and knowledge of Jesus. Being rooted in the man of history, adding to faith the Christian virtues, and conforming to the image of the Son will bring us to the eternal kingdom.

An Example

"We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation (Heb. 2:1-3). "We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are lazy to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil" (Heb. 5:11-14).

The dangers of forgetting are spelled-out clearly to this congregation that is on the verge of apostasy. So the Hebrews writer exhorts them to "leave elementary teachings" and go on to "solid food." They have not done so because they are lazy to learn. The solid food of Hebrews is Jesus.

Paul exhorts Timothy to remember Jesus for he is the "anchor" of the soul.

"Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself" (2 Tim. 2:11-13). ❑

Contact Tim Sensing at Mebane Street Church of Christ, PO Box 1861, Burlington, NC 27216-1861]

Benjoes, Brothers and Falling Off Walls

By Bruce Thweatt

BENJOES ARE DIRTY, NASTY THINGS. John Toland (the historian) traces the word to a corruption of the Japanese word for toilet. I suppose that is where it came from; certainly, that is a close description of the major function of benjoes when I was a boy in Taipei. We didn't spell it like Toland does, but I suppose I might as well use his spelling. What we agree on is that benjoes stink. No one in their right mind wants anything to do with one. Of course, they have their uses. In a poor and underdeveloped country that uses certain unmentionable substances to enhance crop development, it becomes a valuable resource to the farmers trying to squeeze two and three crops a year out of the same overworked plot of land. It doubles as storm drainage when the torrential rains hit, or when typhoons dump monstrous volumes of water on the island. It even becomes a sort of anywhere you are "rest area." Still, even knowing the purposes and uses of the thing, you can't get around the fact that a benjoe is a dirty, smelly, stinky thing!

Growing up in Taipei every house had a wall around it. Usually about six feet high, with pillars to support it every eight or ten feet. Just outside the wall was the benjoe, just like a moat around a castle. We used to climb up on that wall and watch the people on the street outside. Carts pulled by water buffalo would fill the street most of the time. Farmers driving water buffalo to the rice paddies would walk behind a pair. Vendor's carts and pedicabs floated through a sea of bicycles. We would climb up, lean out and watch the parade. There wasn't much room on top of the wall, not even by the gateposts. So when something really interesting came around, like the vintage army tanks getting ready for the Double-Ten Day parade, we would really jostle and squirm to get a good vantage point.

I didn't push him. I know I didn't! We were both leaning way on out trying to see inside the tank parked just outside the gate. He leaned too far. I could tell he was falling, because all of a sudden, I could feel the weight beside me moving out. His arms were flailing around, trying to grab anything to stay up on top, but there was nothing to grab but me. Now remember this happens in a split second! His hand hit my hand, and for a micro-second, I had hold of it. Then I felt it—gravity pulling me out and down. I let go. With emphasis. Unmistakable emphasis. I did not push. I just declined to join the plunge into that open and waiting benjoe. He disappeared from view. I mean a clean half gainer into the murk and muck. Baptized, sort of. I guess the meanest thing was that when he came to the surface (on his own—we weren't going after him), nobody would give him a hand, and he couldn't climb out by himself. It was too deep, and the banks were too high, and he was too covered with slime. Finally, someone ran back to the yard and got a baseball bat to hold out to him. Oh yeah, the soldiers we had been watching? Now they were watching us! Help? They were laughing too hard to help!

But I didn't push him in. I just led him up on the wall. Two young boys, trying to sit where space did not allow, to see the sights outside. Two kids finding out about the law of gravity. One who trusted that his older brother knew what he was doing and ended up in the benjoe. Jesus said many things about trusting our guides and choosing our guides carefully. So many things that we think are safe just don't turn out to be safe. If we trust the wrong guides, we just may be headed for the benjoe.

"And He also spoke a parable to them: 'A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit? A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher. And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye," when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye'" (Luke 6:39-42, NASV).

One final point about trusting our guides comes to mind. We had visitors several years later. They asked us to show their daughters around school and the city. We were walking to school through the rice paddies, well actually, walking around the rice paddies on the narrow dirt walls that held the water in. Of course, you walked around the rectangular path carefully, since they were normally fertilized with things that you don't care to touch. As we led down the path, our visitors got tired of our indirect route. The paddies were not full of rice, instead they were covered with thick green algae, so thick you couldn't see the water. When our guests decided that the shortest distance between two points was a straight line, and we were in sight of the school, they took the initiative and tried a shortcut. Thigh-deep in rice paddy scum. Boy were they mad at us! Never mind whose idea the shortcut was, it was our fault. I guess it was rude to laugh, but you should have heard them shriek! And the look on their faces was just more than we could take.

When we are unfamiliar with where we are going, we need a guide, and if we are to travel safely, we must obey the guide, listen to instructions and carry them out accurately. When we ignore the guide to God, we will step off the

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path. We will find ourselves mired in the scum. If ever we need to listen to the guide, isn't it when we want to travel to God? If human guides to human destinations are needed, how much more do we need the only guide to God, which is Jesus Christ, the "way, the truth, and the life?" How valuable then is the word which brings us to Christ? What else could ever bring us to Him? What else could ever lead us that would not be "the blind leading the blind" until we all fall into the pit?

One more thought occurs to me that strikes home—if we fail to look at Jesus Christ, eternal and revealed in His Word, how will we recognize our own blindness?

Even worse, if we fail to see Him, who will be our guide? ❑

Bruce Thweatt, the son of missionaries, preaches for the Westside church in Rocky Mount, NC. He may be contacted at PO Box 8619, Rocky Mount, NC 27804-8619.

In Defense of Christianity?

By Stanley N. Helton

IT ALL STARTED WITH AN INSENSITIVE word.

The famous Scopes Trial, better known by de Camp's title, **The Great Monkey Trial**, was the event of the century for the quiet community of Dayton, Tennessee. In 1925 the opponents squared off. In one corner recoiled William Jennings Bryan, a three-time losing presidential candidate, whom the Fundamentalists enlisted to defend the cause of Christianity; in the other corner, the American Civil Liberties Union's Clarence Darrow, the famous trial lawyer and skeptic. Anti-fundamentalist H. L. Mencken gave the world the blow-by-blow account of the event, the first to be nationally aired by radio. Near what was to be the end of the fight, Bryan made his crucial error: he accepted Darrow's challenge to take the stand as an expert on the Bible. Within minutes Darrow knocked him out, and, for many, Christianity had sustained a debilitating loss.

Before Bryan left Dayton, Tennessee, he died.

The symbolism was complete.

But what set this course of event in motion?

A resident of Dayton, George Washington Rappleyea, though a native New Yorker and next to Scopes the only evolutionist in town, was the manager for the Cumberland Coal and Iron Company. After one of his worker's lost his six-year-old son in a car-train accident, Rappleyea attended the funeral where he heard the child's mother moan, "Oh, if I only knew he was with Jesus! If I only knew that!"

Unfortunately the evolutionist also heard the preacher's reply, "I'll not lie to you even to bring you peace. The ways of the Lord are His. You know and everybody here knows that this boy had never been baptized. He never confessed Christ. There can be no doubt but that at this moment he is in the flames of Hell."

Rappleyea—though not generally hostile towards religion, became incensed at the minister's coldness—brought the ACLU's offer to underwrite a test case against the anti-evolution law to the attention of the local people. Later Rappleyea told the press, "Well, a few days later, I heard that this same bunch, the Fundamentalists, had passed that anti-evolution law, and I made up my mind I'd show the world."

It all started with an insensitive word from a self-avowed Christian!

(Based on the account in L. Sprague de Camp, **The Great Monkey Trial** [Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1968], 6-7).

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Incomplete Faith

By Rob Albright

IT IS POSSIBLE FOR FAITH TO BE incomplete. Many just do not understand the real meaning or purpose of faith. Is faith just an intellectual assertion?

Without faith it is impossible to be pleasing to God (Heb. 11:6). Does this mean all we have to do is just "intellectually" believe in God and have a good attitude about Him?

In Hebrews 11:8 the Bible says, "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called...." Abraham had a good attitude toward God but his faith was complete when he expressed it in a certain way, namely, by his obedience. Blessings of faith come after faith is expressed. Several examples of this fact are available in the Bible. Here is one.

In John 9 we read of a man born blind. This man expressed his faith in Jesus by following His command to "Go wash in the pool of Siloam." When he obeyed (expressed his faith) he received his sight (vs. 11).

In order for us to receive the forgiveness of sins, our faith must express itself in baptism. Otherwise, faith is incomplete. Forgiveness is not realized until after baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16). God says there is a specific action that expresses faith and in this action sin is removed, and we are made right in God's eyes. That action is baptism. Incomplete faith is shown by saying "No" to baptism and thinking it has nothing to do with salvation. ❑

Rob Albright may be contacted at RR 4 Box 623, Thomasville, NC 27360.

A Personal Bible

By Wellington Smith

ACCORDING TO MARK THE MONK ("Mark the Ascetic," 5th/6th century), "He who is humble in his thoughts and engaged in spiritual work, when he reads the Holy Scriptures, will apply everything to himself and not to his neighbor." We are to look throughout Scripture for a *personal* application. Our question is not simply "What does it mean?" but "What does it mean *for me*?" Christ is speaking to *us*! Scripture is a direct, intimate dialogue between the Savior and myself—Christ addressing me and my heart responding. This must be a part of our criterion for our Bible reading.

I am to see all the narratives in Scripture as part of my own personal story. The description of Adam's fall is equally an account of something in my own experience. Who is Adam? His name simply means "man," "human": it is I who am Adam. It is to me that God says, "Where are *you*?" (Gen. 3:9). We often ask, "Where is *God*?" But the real question is the one that God puts to the Adam in each of us: "Where are *you*?"

Who is Cain, the murderer of his brother? It is I. God's challenge, "Where is Abel your brother?" (Gen. 4:9), is addressed to the Cain in each of us. The way to God lies through love for Him, but also love for other people, and there is no other way. Disowning my sister or brother, I replace the image of God with the mark of Cain, and deny my essential humanity.

The same personal application is evident in Luke 10:30. I am the man "who fell among thieves." In Luke 15:11-14, I am the younger son, and having wasted the wealth that was given to me am now starved and hungry. In Matthew 25:31-46, I am either a "sheep that is known of God," or I am a goat. That means *me*!

There are three steps to be taken when reading Scripture. First, we recognize that what we have in Scripture is *sacred history*: the history of the world from the Creation, the history of God's chosen people, the history of God Himself incarnate in Palestine, the history of the "wonderful works" (Acts 2:11) after Pentecost. We are never to forget that what we find in the Bible is not an ideology, nor philosophical theory, but historical faith.

Next, we observe the specificity, the *particularity* of this sacred history. In the Bible we find God intervening at specific times and in particular ways, entering into dialogue with individual humans. We see before us the distinctive calls issued by God to each different person, to Abraham, Moses, and to David, to Rebekah and Ruth, to Isaiah and the prophets. We see God becoming incarnate once only, in a particular corner of the earth, at a particular moment, and through a particular woman. This particularity we are to regard, not as a scandal, but as a blessing. Divine love is universal in its scope, but always personal in its expression.

Recognizing the specificity of the Bible is a vital element in developing the "spiritual mind." If we really love God, we will love genealogies and the details of dating and geography. One of the best ways to enliven the study of Scripture is to go on a trip to the Bible Lands. Walk where Jesus walked. Go down to the Dead Sea, climb the mountain of temptation, scan the desolation, feel how Jesus must have felt during His forty days alone in the wilderness. Drink from the well where Jesus spoke with the Samaritan woman. Take a boat out on the Sea of Galilee, and then stop the engine, and gaze in silence across the water. Go at night to the Garden of Gethsemane, sit in the dark under the ancient olive trees, and look across the valley to the lights of the city. Taste to the utmost the characteristic "is-ness" of the historical setting, and take that experience back to daily Scripture reading.

Then we are to take a third step. After reliving Bible history in all its particularity we are to apply it *directly to ourselves*. We are to say to ourselves, "These are not just distant places, events in the remote past. They belong to my own encounter with the Lord. The stories include me."

Betrayal, for instance, is part of the personal story of everyone. Have we not all betrayed others at some time in our lives, and have we not all known what it is to be betrayed? And does not the memory of these moments leave deep, lasting scars on our psyches? Reading, then, the account of Peter's betrayal of Jesus and of Peter's subsequent restoration following the resurrection, we can see ourselves as each actor in the story. Imagining what both Peter and Jesus experienced at the moment immediately after the betrayal, we make their feelings our own. I am Peter; in the situation of betrayal, can I also be Christ? Reflecting likewise on the moment of reconciliation—seeing how the Savior, with a love utterly devoid of sentimentality, restored the fallen Peter to full fellowship, and seeing how Peter, for his part, had the humility and courage to accept this restoration—we ask ourselves: "How Christ-like am I to those who have betrayed me?" And after my own acts of betrayal, am I able to accept the forgiveness of others: am I able to forgive myself?

Take as another example the "woman who was a sinner," who emptied the flask of ointment over Christ's feet (Luke 7:36-50), and whom some identify with Mary Magdalene. Can I see her mirrored in myself? Do I share in her generosity, in her spontaneity and loving impulsiveness? "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much." Or am I calculating, mean, timid, holding myself back, never willing to commit myself fully to anything, either good or bad? There is a saying in the Middle East that applies here: "Better someone who has sinned and repents, than a person who has not sinned and thinks of himself as righteous."

A personal approach of this kind means that in reading the Bible we are not simply detached and objective observers, absorbing in-

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formation, taking note of facts. The Bible is not merely a work of literature or a collection of historical documents, although it can certainly be approached on that level. It is, much more fundamentally, a *sacred* book, addressed to *believers*, to be read with faith and love. We shall not profit fully from reading the Gospels unless we are in love with Christ. Heart speaks to heart. I enter into the living truth of Scripture only when my heart responds with love to the heart of God.

Reading Scripture in this way—in obedience, as a member of the church, finding Christ everywhere, and seeing everything as part of my own personal story—we shall sense something of the power and healing to be found in the Bible. Yet always in our biblical voyage of exploration we are only at the very beginning. We are like someone launching out in a tiny boat across a limitless ocean. But, however great the journey, we can embark on it today, at this very hour, in this very moment.

At the high point of his spiritual crisis, wrestling with himself alone in the garden, Augustine heard a child's voice crying out, "Take up and read, take up and read." He took up his Bible and read, and what he read altered his entire life. Let us do the same: *Take up and read.*

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). ❑

Wellington Smith may be contacted at PO Box 2106, Monroe, NC 28110.

A Sucker Born Every Minute

By Charles R. Lambert

IN THE FALL OF 1952 MY FATHER AND I were riding in an old pick-up truck. My dad was proud of that old truck and kept in spic and span. We were headed to the Fair grounds, on the other side of town. I was the only one in the family going to the Fair—I was the only one who had any money. Times were hard, but I had worked all summer, and I had saved my money. My father strongly advised me to take just half of my money to the Fair. But I refused to listen.I was determined to get a hot dog, some cotton candy, and a very large soda.

All the way to the Fair grounds my dad tried to talk me into saving a portion of my hard-earned money. I didn't reply. I just had to see what the kids at school were talking about–and I had the money to see this carnival.

I could see myself on the merry-go-round. Riding the bumper cars. Or maybe the ferris wheel. I was tormented and twisted inside because I had worked hard that summer. But I was ready to spend my money—no matter what dad said.

We finally arrived at the Fair grounds. The high grass was already trampled down by people and cars. I dashed to the entrance of the carnival, but before I entered, I looked back at my father sitting in the truck. He was looking at me. Once inside though I forgot all about that look. Besides, there was a man on stilts waving me on into this mysterious adventure, and I was in a hurry.

As I walked down the midway, the carnival barkers worked themselves into a frenzy trying to get me to play their games. I looked at the lights, the signs, the tents, and I listened to the music—trying to take it all in. It was a noisy place and there were huge black cables snaking over the ground supplying power for the carnival.

All of a sudden a man pulled me by my shirt over to his game. He was all excited and he said to me, "Play this game for a dollar and win a doll for your girl." Right away I thought I could win one for my sisters because I didn't have a girl. When I have the man a dollar, he saw how much money I had. I tossed all three rings at a stick on a display table made of brightly colored board. Naturally, I missed. The next thing I knew he had taken another dollar out of my hand, and I was throwing three more rings. I knew I had to get away from him in order to keep the eight dollars I had left. As I walked away the man was still yelling for me to try again. Down the midway was a shooting gallery. I thought, "You know, I have my own rifle at home. Maybe I can beat this man at his own game." I heard him say, "Five shots for a dollar, Sonny." I gave him a dollar and started firing. Needless to say, I lost my remaining eight dollars. If I hit a target I couldn't knock it down. It was rigged.

The next thing I heard was, "That's all, Sonny. You lose." I had lost the whole ten dollars, and I didn't even get a hot dog, or a soda; not to mention the cotton candy.

I saw a policeman walking by and I told him what had happened. He looked me right in the eye and said, "Sonny, that's what the carnival is all about. A sucker is born every minute."

So I turned and walked through the exit to my father, waiting in the truck. I got in and slowly looked at him. He asked if I had lost it all. I answered, "Yes. All ten dollars. And I didn't even get a soda or a hot dog." My dad responded, "Well, you learned a valuable lesson. Let's go home."

I haven't spent a dollar at a carnival since then, unless it was for a soda or food. I still like to walk by and see the lights, but no barker has gotten another dollar out of my pocket.

The man said, "A sucker is born every minute." Who knows this better than Satan? Every sin we commit is because Satan has taken advantage of the opportunity to make us sin. No one, except Jesus, has been able to resist the devil's huckstering.

Satan has the bright lights and the enticements along the midway. He offers fun, excitement, and prizes to be won. But all the games are rigged. In the end, those who believe his spiel, lose it all. And Satan plays for higher stakes than money.

Jesus has defeated Satan, and through His grace and mercy we, too, can successfully resist the devil's temptations. James urges, "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

Don't let Satan sucker you. ❑

Charles R. Lambert worships with the church in Myrtle Beach, SC. He may be contacted at 3418 Longwood Lane, Conway, SC 29527.

Second Annual Men's Day
January 15, 1994

The Walkup Avenue church will host its Second Annual Men's Day on Saturday, January 15, 1994. The program will begin with Registration at 9:15. Craig Hinrichs from Winnsboro, SC will speak at 10:30 on "Loving God." Bob Rigdon from Sylva, NC will speak at 11:30 on "Loving Your Neighbor." After Lunch at a local restaurant, Tom Bolick will speak at 1:30 on "Loving Yourself." There will be a brief Open Forum and the program will conclude at 3:00. Contact Wellington Smith for additonal information.

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Book Reviews

Hooper, Robert E. **A Distinct People: A History of the Churches of Christ in the 20th Century.** West Monroe, LA: Howard Publishing Co., 1993.

ROBERT HOOPER HAS WRITTEN both an interesting and enjoyable history of the Restoration Movement in the 20th century. He begins with a short chapter to set the stage by reviewing the history of the movement in the 19th century. Hooper not only reports history, he also makes a defense of the Restoration Plea for unity. He keeps an eye on the outsider who might read this volume noting several themes that both identify and clarify who we are as a movement. In this, he demonstrates why we are where we are as a "Distinct People" in the religious landscape today.

This comprehensive history includes many preachers, church leaders, and congregations that most readers will be familiar with. Several of these men are still actively involved in ministry. Some of these past and present church leaders are: N. B. Hardeman; R. H. Boll; H. Leo Boles; T. B. Larimore; Foy E. Wallace, Jr.; G. C. Brewer; M. Norvel Young; Batsell Baxter and his son Batsell Barrett Baxter; Willard Collins; Don Morris; Ira North; B. C. Goodpasture; Reuel Lemmons; Marshall Keeble; G. P. Bowser; and many more. One notable exception is the absence of Gus Nichols. Hooper demonstrates with these lengthy discussions of personalities their influence on the direction of the movement.

Hooper approaches his subject by discussing many vital topics which include: the division in 1906; war and peace; premillennialism; higher criticism; benevolence; instrumental music; noninstitutionalism; evangelism; Christian Colleges; the use of media; periodicals; politics; black churches; Boston movement; and more.

Hooper includes three helpful Appendixes. Appendix 1 is a timeline of the American Restoration Movement and Churches of Christ. Appendix 2 is a timeline of leading Journals and Papers as current as **Image** and **Wineskins** but excluding **Carolina Christian**. Appendix 3 is a timeline of Christian College Presidents and their terms.

I believe it is spiritually healthy to know our deepest roots in American Christianity. Hooper provides a current history that creates even a greater identity for me in our fellowship.

Osburn, Carroll D. **The Peaceable Kingdom: Essays Favoring Non-Sectarian Christianity.** Abilene, TX: Restoration Perspectives, 1993. Paper, $10.95.

OSBURN PRESENTS VARIOUS ESSAYS from some of his recent speeches. These essays are linked together by their common theme of unity and fellowship and our tendency toward sectarianism. Osburn's intent is to demonstrate that as a distinct movement our future depends upon responsible use of the Bible. Osburn provides a needful study that should contribute greatly to a restored unity within the body of Christ. Some of these essays are quite technical and not easily digested by those not familiar with detailed exegetical work. Other essays are written on a more popular level. Osburn is a careful exegete with whom one could not easily disagree. He provides a fresh perspective of our fellowship from biblical scholarship.

Osburn begins with a discussion of our own roots in sectarianism. Churches are changing. Osburn identifies two extremes that are equally dangerous. First, our philosophical and historical roots has led us to a rationalism that tended toward legalism. As a changing movement, some segments in our fellowship are moving to the other extreme of emotional pietism. These changes lead to a confusion of who we are as a people.

Osburn discusses in detail our shifts in orientation biblically, theologically, and experientially. As a people, we are changing without knowing the consequences that those changes will bring. Presently, those changes are leaving many confused and frustrated because some long loved convictions that identified us as a distinct people are being discarded easily. Osburn asks, "Is there any future in our religious past?"

During this transition, Osburn gives us a glimpse of how we can travel. Where this journey will take us is unknown. Since we as a movement are changing, it is best to do so with eyes open and by using navigational instruments that provide valuable controls. Osburn advocates a forward push in the restoration ideal of non-sectarian Christianity. He states, "Either we shall lead in a positive reclamation of biblical Christianity for our age or we shall continue to follow societal changes now in progress among us and retire to the margin, and perhaps self-destruct." Osburn envisions this "positive reclamation" as our future.

Osburn's second chapter reviews some often overlooked roots of the Restoration Movement among the Scottish "independents" of the 17th and 18th centuries. Their tendency toward division and sectarianism has a startling influence upon our current situation. Why does a unity movement have such a tendency to be divided? Osburn explores the question, "Is division inherent within restoration thought?"

The ongoing quest for understanding the relationship between historic faith and modern culture leads to two unacceptable responses, namely, "accommodation or reaction." After careful analysis and rejection of these alternatives, Osburn offers a third choice—"conservatism." Osburn presents clearly a literary-historical critical methodology for understanding the Bible. He concludes this section by stating, "The conservative alternative to fundamentalism and liberalism is compelling. Controlled analysis, which interprets the biblical text in its own linguistic, historical, and cultural settings, provides the essential matrix within which non-sectarian Christianity can emerge and flourish, developing responsible theological perspective within an ever-changing culture."

Chapters 4 and 5 are written as correctives to sectarian abuses of 2 John and Jude. The exegesis of these texts offers a model for the methodology advocated in chapter 3. Often these texts are used to bring about greater strife within our fellowship. Osburn brings forth clearly the author's original intent of 2 John and Jude. **Carolina Christian**'s September issue devoted to Jude clearly demonstrates a dependance upon Osburn's exegetical methodology. How many of those author's were influenced by Osburn directly? At least four; yet all the articles reflect a literary-historical methodology.

Osburn concludes this volume with a positive presentation of the "identifying marks of the church." Avoiding the fruitless and endless discussions of issues, Osburn clarifies Jesus' view of the kingdom. Osburn seeks to rediscover in the text what "God calls priority." In seeking the essential nature and "theological essence" of Christianity, we must reject sectarianism. He closes, "We should not be surprised if the process demands more of us than we are inclined to give; in fact, it is possible to measure how much we truly accept the Bible as scripture by the degree to which we are willing to risk conforming to what the Bible actually says. That is one of the risks of taking the Bible seriously—we might have to change." ❑

Tim Sensing, PO Box 1861, Mebane Street Church of Christ, Burlington NC 27216-1861.

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Lucas, Jerri McCann. **Lessons From Esther**. Abilene: Quality Publications, 1991.

WHILE THERE ARE MANY LESSONS to be learned from the Old Testament, many of us often overlook them. Jerri McCann Lucas in **Lessons From Esther** brings the book of Esther to life in a practical way. Lucas begins with a historical setting for the book of Esther. She includes a discussion of location as well as the people of Esther's day.

Lucas's book details incidents from Esther and makes practical applications for us today. Among these are the perils of a "heart merry with wine." We know that the King had been feasting for many days where the wine was in abundance. King Ahasuerus was "merry with wine" when he asked Queen Vashti to come and display her beauty before all those attending the feast. Had King Ahasuerus lived soberly, his dilemma with Vashti may have been avoided.

Lucas deals with the subject of giving husbands honor. Did Vashti bring dishonor to the King when she did not come? Lucas points out that a woman's actions do affect her husband's reputation. On the other hand, the King failed to submit to Queen Vashti's needs when he commanded her to appear before the crowd. When we keep God first in our lives, we can be submissive to each other and bring honor to each other. Lucas states, "Our submission, or communication, should be done privately or 'decently and in order.'" She bases this on 1 Corinthians 14:40. Even though I agree with her conclusion, I don't think that this Scripture applies to this situation.

The Jews certainly knew about prejudice. Mordecai advised Esther not to tell the King she was a Jew, because this may have prejudiced the King against her. Lucas discusses this and other examples of prejudice from Scripture as well as examples from today. She leaves us with the thought: We are all equal in Christ, and love has no color.

Lucas points out that the Jews were a "peculiar people," called out by God. Are we as Christians a "peculiar people?" She asks: Who do we belong to?; Are we "peculiar" in manner of life?; and, Are we "peculiar" in worship?

Chaste is a word we don't often use, and chastity is a virtue we don't often discuss. Lucas points out that Esther is a classic example of a chaste woman. She defines chaste as "being virtuous, modest, restrained, and simple in style, not ornate or extreme."

Finally, Lucas reminds us how the Jews "gathered themselves together." There is a lot of power to be gained by unity. We can ask ourselves, do we as Christians stand together?

The book is divided into thirteen chapters, each with discussion questions. Each chapter includes many other Scripture references pertaining to each topic. I think it would be a worthwhile study for Ladies Classes or for individual study. ☐

Karen McGee, worships with the Mebane Street Church of Christ, Burlington NC 27216-1861.

Brotherhood News

By Michael R. Mobley

STATESVILLE, NC...THE NORTHVIEW congregation reports that ten congregations and four businesses responded to their second relief effort for the flood victims of the midwest. They sent a truckload of 34 buckets, 800 pounds of nails, 70 hammers, 150 blankets, 65 pillows, 140 sheets, 75 pillow cases, 104 gallons of bleach, 5000 bars of soap, and much more. In addition to the supplies, $1,775 was collected and sent. BANNER ELK, NC...This young church has a new building which constructed with volunteer help in two weeks. Don Iverson is the preacher. ASHEBORO, NC...Amos Allen is the new preacher for the Meadowbrook church. We welcome Brother Allen to the Carolinas. ☐

Send news items to Michael R. Mobley, PO Box 312, Mooresville, NC 28115

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- Enough *friends* to give you comfort
- Enough *wealth* to meet your needs
- Enough *enthusiasm* to make you look forward to tomorrow
- Enough *determination* to make each day better than the day before

Carolina Christian

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Editorial

By Johnny R. Melton

GUY N. WOODS IS DEAD. BROTHER Woods died at the age of 85 on December 8, 1993. He had been found unconscious in his home about noon on November 20.

Woods was baptized on August 24, 1926 and one month later, on his eighteenth birthday (September 26, 1926) he preached his first sermon. He studied under N. B. Hardeman at Freed-Hardeman College. He went on to earn a law degree and was admitted to the bar, although he never practiced law as a profession.

Brother Woods served local churches in Tennessee, Kentucky and Texas. However, he was best known for the many years he devoted to Gospel Meeting work. For many years he conducted fifty meetings a year and kept 200 meetings booked ahead. He returned to many churches on regular intervals for Meetings. One church that he visited regularly for many years was Warners Chapel in Clemmons, NC. After 1978 brother Woods conducted week-end meetings rather than week-long efforts, but he maintained a full schedule until failing health last year forced him to end his meeting work.

For fifty years Woods was associated with the Gospel Advocate Company. For many years he wrote the Adult Bible school quarterlies and the annual lesson commentaries for the Advocates's literature series. He also contributed articles to the *Gospel Advocate* magazine on a regular basis, serving as a staff writer. He wrote three volumes (**John**, **James**, and **Peter, Jude, and John**) in the Gospel Advocate Commentary series. In 1978, following the death of B. C. Goodpasture, long-time editor of the *Gospel Advocate*, he was named associate editor when Ira North was named editor. In 1981 he was named editor of the magazine and served in that capacity until 1985, at which time he became query editor, a position he held at the time of his death.

For more than thirty years brother Woods conducted the Open Forum at the Annual Bible Lectureship hosted by Freed-Hardeman University. Under his direction the Open Forum became one of the most popular features of that Lectureship. He retired from the post as moderator of the Forum in 1982. Brother Woods also conducted more than 100 religious debates. I had the opportunity to hear him conduct the Open Forum at Freed-Hardeman from 1967 until 1982. I also heard him debate Ben Franklin in 1974 in Gadsden, Alabama. I learned a great deal from brother Woods in those settings.

Howard Winters had a great love and deep appreciation for brother Woods. In discussions that I had with him on various matters, he would humorously characterize me as a "Warren-ite" (because of the influence Thomas Warren had on my thinking) and he would refer to himself as a "Woods-ite" (because of the influence brother Woods had on his thinking). Brother Winters respected brother Woods as a preacher and even reprinted one of brother Woods's books of sermons (**The Second Coming and Other Sermons**) after it had been out-of-print for several years.

Brother Woods had a deep and abiding love for Scripture. He knew the content of the Bible as thoroughly as anyone I have ever known. He never ceased to be a diligent student. He recently wrote a book entitled, **How to Study the New Testament Effectively**, and just prior to his death he completed a revision of **The People's New Testament With Notes** by B. W. Johnson, which is yet to be published.

As a scholar, author, pulpiteer and Christian gentleman Guy N. Woods made a profound impact on the churches of Christ for more than a half-century. We lament his passing and pay tribute to his memory.

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Jude Review

The September issue of **Carolina Christian** was a study of the epistle of Jude. That issue has been praised as one of the best in the history of the magazine, and it has been criticized as one of the worst. Jack Simons, minister for the Warners Chapel church in Clemmons, NC, has written a review of that issue which we are publishing in this issue (see page 17).

We appreciate brother Simons's concern for truth and the good spirit in which he has written his review. We do not agree with his conclusion that the articles on Jude misrepresent or compromise the Scriptures, but we believe that he has expressed a point of view that deserves to be considered.

I have asked Dennis Conner to write a rejoinder to brother Simons's review article which will appear in the February issue. In the meantime, you may wish to re-read the September issue, and you will certainly want to read Jude, and then read brother Simons's article. You may also wish to read Carrol D. Osburn's essay "Contend for the Faith" in his book **The Peaceable Kingdom** (available from Carolina Christian Bookstore). Truth is never threatened by careful and honest study, and the time spent reflecting on the message of Jude will prove to be a blessing.❑

Associate Editorial

Bible Study Helps, No. 4

By Jim Mullican

ARCHAEOLOGY IS THE STUDY OF the past, primarily through physical remains such as jewelry, coins, monuments, buildings, pottery, tombs, weapons and other items built or made by people in times past, as well as their written records in some cases.

Archaeology has unearthed many biblical cities. Recently an ossuary, or "bone box," bearing the name "Caiaphas," and perhaps containing the bones of the high priest who condemned Jesus to die, was found near Jerusalem. "The pavement" of John 19:13 can be seen in Jerusalem today. What may be the house of Peter at Capernaum has been uncovered, along with a second-century synagogue built on the ruins of an earlier one in which Jesus may have taught.

Many tablets and monuments have been unearthed which bear the names of people mentioned in the Bible, and some of them bear dates which enable us to determine more exactly when certain biblical events took place. Most of the time, archaeology sheds indirect light on biblical practices, but sometimes the items discovered have been of specific value in verifying biblical accounts. For example, Isaiah 36-37 tells how Sennacherib, king of Assyria, "came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them" (Isa. 36:1), but the account concludes with an angel of the Lord slaying 185,000 Assyrians in a single night, so that Sennacherib returned to Assyria without capturing Jerusalem. In 1924, the **Annals of Sennacherib** were published. In his own record of this campaign, Sennacherib boasts of all he accomplished, and how he inspired fear in everyone. He says, "As to Hezekiah the Jew, he did not submit to my yoke. I laid siege to 46 of his strong cities, walled forts, and to the countless small villages in their vicinity, and conquered them...I drove out of them 200,150 people, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, big and small cattle beyond counting, and considered them booty. Hezekiah himself I made a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage" (**Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament**, ed. by James Pritchard, p. 288). He concludes by saying Hezekiah sent him tribute to Nineveh later, but while he tries to portray the campaign as a great victory, he never claims to have captured Jerusalem or Hezekiah. In this he strikingly confirms the biblical record. To leave a rebellious king like Hezekiah in power would be unthinkable under ordinary circumstances. Only an event like that described in Isaiah 37:36 can account for it.

Some of the best books on archaeology as it bears witness to the Bible are also quite expensive. Two of the best are **Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament** and **The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament**, both of which are edited by James Pritchard (about $130 for both volumes). However, **The Ancient Near East** (Volumes I and II), is an abridgment of these volumes and can be bought for about $10 per volume. **Light from the Ancient Past** (Volumes I and II), by Jack Finegan, is in the same price range. In addition, much archaeological material can be found in Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias, which have been discussed earlier.

Two magazines, *Biblical Archaeologist* and *Biblical Archaeology Review*, are also helpful, but in reading them it is necessary to make allowances for the liberal theological positions of most of the writers.

Two excellent video series have also been produced by Dr. Bill Humble, a Bible professor at Abilene Christian University. They are entitled ***The Bible Lands—Walking Where Jesus Walked***, and ***Archaeology and the Bible***. Viewing these is probably the next-best thing to going there, and costs considerably less. They may be ordered from Carolina Christian Bookstore.❑

RR. 4 Box 30-A, Clyde, NC 28721.

Hearing Tests and Triple Jeopardy!

By Bruce Thweatt

FIFTH GRADE WAS AN INTERESTING year in many ways. First of all, it was my first school year in the United States. Secondly, we were in Alabama. Thirdly, my father pulled double duty as my principal at school, triple duty if you include preaching. I don't know for sure just who had the worst job. Probably him. It was the year I discovered long division and football, not necessarily in that order. It was when my best friends and I decided we would all be major league baseball stars. At least they did make it to Triple A before injuries and all the unpredictable bounces of a baseball career changed things. It was the year that Mrs. Jenkins taught fifth grade at Madison Academy. It was also the year I discovered that the book shelf under the desk top was the perfect place to hide the book you were reading during class. Remember those flat topped desks with a shelf right below the top? Yes, perfect for hiding what you were reading. Just tall enough to turn the page silently. All you had to do was sit just slightly back of the desk and you could read all day. Well, as long as you didn't get caught you could! I discovered this early in the year. The second day, I think it was, and by the third day I had a system. Since the big trick was not to get caught, I enlisted an accomplice in the boy who sat behind me. He evidently had concluded that having the principal's son owe him favors was not a bad circumstance. (He obviously didn't know my Dad, but I wasn't going to set him straight.) So whenever Mrs. Jenkins started down our row, he would kick me. It worked beautifully.

For months I read to my heart's content every day. The rest of the class was introduced to long division in September, but it was news to me! I met long division at home where it took special tutoring sessions with math-major Dad before I even came close. I could figure out the right answers, but had no idea of how! The unfortunate side effect of this was to bring me

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to Mrs. Jenkins attention. To be truthful, she was a very conscientious teacher, and she found my difficulties in learning long division to be a professional challenge, one she was determined to meet successfully. So she paid me more attention than ever. This meant I got kicked more than ever. It also meant my reading was interrupted more than ever. Obviously, this situation had to be corrected. I was getting sore where my accomplice kept his end of the bargain.

Something you should know about my reading is that if you ever find me reading and start talking to me, I probably won't even hear you. I don't mean I'll hear you and ignore you; I mean, I DON'T hear you! I'm in another world. So when Mrs. Jenkins began to pay more attention to me, she would try to involve me in the class discussion. So she would call on me for an answer. Of course, I would have answered her if I'd heard her, but as we all know by now, I was reading. She would call my name two or three times, getting louder each time, until she would give up and start to walk to my desk. Of course this got me kicked just in time to slide the book up under the desk top and say sweetly, "Yes ma'am?"

This went on for weeks until the county health department sent around an audiologist as part of their new program to identify children with hearing problems. Mrs. Jenkins thought her prayers had been answered! She referred me so fast, the ink wasn't dry when I got to the nurses's office. I must have been first in line. Hearing tests are cool. You put on these headphones and tell which side you hear the tones on, and if they are louder or softer, higher pitched, or lower pitched, if some sounds are easier to hear than others, it was fun. I have great hearing. The test says so. Mrs. Jenkins sent me back. She knew they had confused me with the test program. They ran it all again. It was still fun. I still had great hearing. Mrs. Jenkins was in shock. I thought I had won, so I started reading my current book. She was still staring at the audiologist's report. I was happy!

I didn't hear her when she called on me a couple of minutes later. You would never have believed that a sweet little gray-haired lady could get around a desk like that—so fast that my accomplice couldn't kick me! She did, though, fast as lightning, everybody said. I think my partner in crime just was too shocked to react. There I was reading away, with Mrs. Jenkins at my elbow with the light of enlightenment beaming on her face. She was not smiling, but she was glowing! She had met the challenge! I think I'm the only kid she paddled that year (perhaps the others were inspired by the demonstration of prowess). It was rude not to listen when you are supposed to, she told me. Then she reported the spanking to the principal—that's when I knew I was in trouble. Double jeopardy or something like that, it had to be illegal, it certainly couldn't be fair. I was in Dad's office within 15 minutes. Double jeopardy applies only when the judge says so, and it is not smart to raise the issue. Then you have to go home. With three sisters and a brother in the same school there was no chance that Mom would not be suitably prepared to reinforce the lesson. Triple jeopardy is not a game show.

All of this because of ears that work perfectly, and yet never heard a word. Jesus used to say fairly often, "He that has ears to hear, let him hear"(Matt. 13:9, NASB). Perhaps we never paid enough attention to what He was saying. What is it that keeps us from hearing what God says? Are we really deaf? Or is it that we just are listening to something else? Perhaps that explains why God sent prophet after prophet who experienced the pain of rejection, the futility of speaking a message that no one seemed to hear. Like Mrs. Jenkins, God is answering the challenge, and it is not His failure that leaves His voice unheard, but our stubborn insistence on doing what we want to do. Jesus said, "'Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; And you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive; For the heart of this people has become dull, And with their ears they scarcely hear, And they have closed their eyes, Lest they should see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart and return, And I should heal them.' But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear"(Matt. 13:13-16, NASB).

When we fail to listen, then we hear only what we want to hear, and see only what we like to see, even worse, we then tell ourselves how close to God we are, how obedient we have become, how diligently we serve, and we aren't listening! That is why mankind does not hear God's voice, we don't listen to it. Instead we concentrate on ourselves, until that is all we hear. Yet, God doesn't stop calling, or speaking.

Jesus told the story, just before His arrest and crucifixion, of the wicked tenants of the vineyard: "'Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey. And when the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce. And the vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, "They will respect my son." But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and seize his inheritance." And they took him, and threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?'" They said to Him, 'He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers, who will pay him the proceeds at the {proper} seasons.' Jesus said to them, 'Did you never read in the Scriptures, "The stone which the builders rejected, This became the chief corner stone; This came about from the Lord, And it is marvelous in our eyes"? Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it. And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.' And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them. And when they sought to seize Him, they feared the multitudes, because they held Him to be a prophet"(Matt. 21:33-46, NASB).

Out of Jesus' own mouth, in His own words, the problem is in the ears of those who will not listen, and even being very religious does insure that your ears are in working order. The very ones who were most offended by this parable set out to kill the Son of God, rather than listen to the Word of God that He spoke to them. Some of the things that close our ears to what we could hear, are as trivial as a boy's book under his desk at school. Some are more involved with our self-image, or our ambitions, or our emotional scars from long ago, but whatever they are, still God speaks so that whoever "has ears to hear, let him hear." When was your last hearing test?❑

Bruce serves the Westside church in Rocky Mount, NC. Contact him at PO Box 8619, Rocky Mount NC 27804-8619.

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Different Translations

By Rob Albright

ACCORDING TO JACK P. LEWIS, "A translation needs to be accurate, intelligible, and readable." (**Questions You've Asked About Bible Translations**, Searcy: Resource Publications, Inc., 1991, p. 3)

What translation one uses in Bible Study, teaching and personal use is an individual decision. It is encouraging to see many people reading more than one translation. This is helpful for anyone who is really concerned with understanding the word of God.

It is disturbing when some people try to insist that we all read just one translation. No one has a right to bind that on others. It is not right to cause division over matters of opinion. Which translation one reads is a matter of opinion. God has not legislated which translation we should use.

Misrepresenting others and labeling them as "unsound" just because they prefer a translation different from the one we use causes division. God has said something about that in Romans 16:17-18. Reading a particular translation does not make one more loyal to the Lord than another person who reads a different translation.

Reading and incorporating into our lives the teaching of Romans 14 and 15 will help us to maintain a proper attitude toward those who do not share our opinions. May we all "make every effort to do what leads to peace and mutual edification" (Rom. 14:19).❑

Rob serves the Thomasville, NC church. Contact him at RR 4 Box 623, Thomasville, NC 27360.

The Embroidered Curtain

By Richard Poling

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE MOSAIC tabernacle includes details of a beautiful curtain. "Make a curtain of fine linen woven with blue, purple, and red yarn. Embroider it with cherubim. Hang it on four posts of acacia wood covered with gold, fitted with hooks, and set in four silver bases. Place the curtain under the row of hooks in the roof of the tent, and put the Covenant Box containing the two tablets of stone behind the curtain. The curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place" (Exod. 26:31–33).

This curtain was only one in a series of barriers between God's holy presence and the common Jewish man or woman. These included the court of the priests, the court of the Israelites, and the outer court (court of the women). Each had walls, gates, and curtains to prevent improper access. The book of Hebrews tells us that priests enter the Holy Place daily but the High Priest only went into the Most Holy Place once a year. Purification ceremonies, sacrifices, and complex rituals were required before passing into the next closer level to God's presence.

"Then Christ came as High Priest...He went through the tabernacle and entered once and for all into the Most Holy Place...he took his own blood and obtained eternal salvation for us" (Heb. 9:11–12). The Gospels record that the moment Jesus died, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. Do you understand the importance of this event to your life? Hebrews explains it this way: "We have, then, my brothers, complete freedom to go into the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus. He opened for us a new way, a living way, through the curtain—that is, through his own body. We have a great priest in charge of the house of God. So let us come near to God with a sincere heart and a sure faith, with hearts that have been purified from a guilty conscience and with bodies washed with clean water" (Heb. 10:19–22).

Now there are no walls, no ceremonies, and no embroidered curtains separating us from God. Only your own will can prevent you from being near to the Living God.❑

Richard Poling serves the Grand Strand Church of Christ, PO Box 14418, Surfside Beach, SC 29587.

Are They Hearing What You're Saying?

By Tim Sensing

THE TRANSMISSION OF A MESSAGE by the preacher does not constitute communication. The message must also be received and understood by the audience before one can say, with any accuracy, that one has communicated. In the consideration of sermons, it should be obvious that more than just the preacher must invest time and energy. The one listening must also put forth effort to receive and understand the message.

Reuel Howe in **Partners in Preaching**, says of the listener: "What is not always realized is that the quality of the hearing has a great deal to do with the quality of the speaking, and that this is a ministry of the congregation. It is just as true that a hearer can project himself in his hearing as a speaker can project himself in his speaking. If the preaching of the Gospel is urgent, so also is the hearing of the Gospel, and an urgent hearer can make an urgent speaker. Each needs each other.... Preaching is a cooperative business, requiring the joint thought and action of preacher and people."

As one endeavors to be a good listener, there are obstacles to be overcome. One of the key obstacles to effective listening is the fact that a person's mind can comprehend 400 to 700 words per minute, while the average public speaker probably speaks at a rate of only 125 words per minute. Consequently, the mind, not being fully occupied with the listening task, can easily drift to other matters. This is a problem for today's complex listener. There is so much going on in a person's life that one's mind and thoughts are seldom free from a jumble of issues and matters that are clamoring for attention. While there may be distractions and excuses for not listening, the ultimate reason for not listening carefully is that the mind is allowed to be sidetracked.

The key to effective listening is to use the excess capacity of the mind to take in more than just the speaker's words. William D. Thompson, in his book, **A Listener's Guide to Preaching**, offers five ingredients for good listening. The following is a summary of Thompson's ingredients.

(1) *Listen for main ideas.* A good listener will endeavor to hear and catalog the major points made by a speaker. As the speaker continues, the hearer in his mind can tie the points together.

(2) *Anticipate the speaker's next point.* What is the speaker getting at? Trying to guess what the speaker is leading up to and then checking this against what he actually says, helps to avoid the pitfall of failing to listen carefully because you feel you know what is coming next.

(3) *Identify yourself with the sermon's ideas.* Endeavor to put yourself into the message. How would you or your family or your church fit into the insights of the sermon. Ask the questions of yourself. Never assume the sermon was intended for someone else; it is you that God is trying to get through to.

(4) *Review what you have learned.* Repetition is a very effective form of learning. During the few seconds between sentences, you have ample time to say to yourself, "The first two points were.... Now here comes the third point." You can recapitulate like that—in such a short time—because you do not have to form the ideas into words.

(5) *Put these principles to work in every situation.* Good listening is a good habit to cultivate. One should not just use such skills in church, but they can be profitably utilized in everyday life. The more such skills are exercised, the better they become.

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Another point could be added to these: *A hearer can also listen for what is not said.* The speaker's mannerism, the emotional commitment to what is being said, the efforts to project a winsome way—these factors, too, can give keys to the hearer as to the speaker's message and intent.

Thompson goes on to suggest to those who want to hear and digest the sermon: "A sermon is a mutual experience we all share, something that happens among us. Your understanding of the sermon will not be exactly like anyone else's, but it is an important part of the total meanings which make up the message today. Try to digest the sermon into the three sentences below. No matter how incomplete, put down what you can. Try to word the ideas as you understand them in terms of your own life.

(1) The problem or need with which the sermon was concerned. Word it as a question.

(2) The truth developed in the sermon in answer to the question. Word it as an assertion.

(3) The response to the truth above which the sermon urged. Word it as an invitation.

The intent of the spoken word is to bring about a response in the hearer. Preaching cannot be judged just by the response it inspires. Many factors may interfere with the hearer to prevent or minimize the response. A lack of response may say more about the hearer than it does the skill of the preacher.

Immediate response is not the real key in preaching. What one says at the exit is not as important as what one does throughout the week. Allow the gospel's power to effect your life and transform your walk.❑

Dr. Tim Sensing, Mebane Street Church of Christ, PO Box 1861, Burlington, NC 27216-1861.

The Right Word

Be Quiet

By Jim Albright

MIRACLES IN THE GOSPELS WHICH are so familiar to us that we have ceased to wonder take on reverent meaning to tribespeople reading them for the first time in their language.

Translators Dr. Darlene Bee and Veda Chenoweth were checking the translation of the calming of the tempest in Mark's Gospel in the New Guinea Usarufa language. Their translation helper, Nogo, came to Mark 4:39 and read, "...'be quiet,' he said, and right away the wind and the water obeyed and stopped raging."

Suddenly Nogo stopped. "No! No!" he exclaimed. "Wind and water don't obey."

The translators thought they had used the wrong term and went back over the account. They explained to Nogo that no mere man could tell the wind to stop blowing and expect it to stop, but that Jesus was God's Son and had the power to do what no other could do. "Now, how can we say in Usarufa that the wind and water did what Jesus told them to do?" they asked the tribesman.

Nogo stopped. "Oh, I see. It obeyed."

Darlene and Veda had used the right word after all. In Usarufa no one had ever said that the wind obeyed, for it never had. When Nogo realized that the wind had actually obeyed Christ's command, he began to share the wonder of the disciples who had witnessed the event.

Many times after that Nogo said to fellow tribesmen, "Have you heard how Jesus made the wind obey?" (Quoted from *Searchlight on Bible Words* © by The Zondervan Corporation, used by permission).

The New Testament was completed in 1980 for the 13,000 Usarufa people, who live in the Eastern Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea. They speak one of Papua New Guinea's 862 languages. In 322 of the languages work is in progress or the New Testament has been completed. Over 130 others have a confirmed need for the Scriptures in their language. They will not be able to understand the power of God in any other language but their own.

Aren't you glad Jesus spoke and the wind and water obeyed?

Jesus can speak to the hurts in people and heal them today, too.

Messiah

Translator Des Oatridge was 18 verses into Matthew chapter one when he snagged on the word Messiah. The concept of Messiah was new to the Binumarien people of Papua New Guinea. With no prior knowledge of Bible truths, the people had no idea what a Messiah could be.

Des explained the word to his translation helper, Sisia, an old leader of the village. The man mulled over the problem and then he told Des, "We have something like that in our language.

"When we need a task done, we decide on the special person to perform the task and then we place him in the center of a circle. One of the elders points his hand at the man and says, 'You are the one we've set aside to fulfill this special task.' From then on we refer to him as 'the man who has had a hand put on him.'"

That man was like an anointed one, which is what Messiah or Christ means in English. Des put this expression into Matthew 1:18 to see if the people would accept it.

Old Sisia told his friends, "Do you know what we translated today? We found out what Messiah means! It means the one God put His hand on."

Astonished, the people cried out, "Is that true? Do you mean that word is supposed to mean something?"

Their whole attitude toward the Christian message changed. Before then, no one believed that God's Word was supposed to mean anything. They considered the gospel message to be unrelated stories, not facts—some kind of magic to get things from God.

Now the Binumarien people saw that God had sent Christ into the world to fulfill a special task—God had His hand on Him. (Quoted from article in *In Other Words* [June 1986] by Larry Clark)

The New Testament was completed for the 300 Binumarien people in 1983.

Maybe God would like to put His hand on you to help with Bible translation. Translators, literacy workers, administrators, teachers, secretaries, printers, computer specialists, pray-ers and givers are needed now.

If God has put His hand on you, shouldn't you do what He told you to do?❑

Jim & Barbe Albright currently work at the Wycliffe-JAARS Center in Waxhaw, NC. They are available to tell more about Bible translation to your church or small group. Call (704) 843-2040.

50th Annual
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Hosted by:
Hickory Church of Christ
Hickory, NC
Date:
April 4–7, 1994
Theme:
Freedom In Christ
An Exposition of Galatians
Featured Speaker:
C. W. Bradley, Memphis, Tn

In Support of British Missions

By Robert Curry

SINCE 1986 I HAVE HAD THE PRIVILEGE of traveling to Great Britain on evangelistic campaigns; working in Dunoon, Glasgow, Paisley and Edinburgh, Scotland, as well as Nottingham, England. My first exposure to this ministry was under the direction of Norman Hogan and Steve Johnson of the Freed-Hardeman University faculty. Since 1992 I have organized my own campaigns and I had the opportunity to preach my first gospel meeting in Great Britain in May/June 1993. At this time I am making plans for another campaign in 1994.

As a result of my work in Scotland and England, I have come to know many wonderful, dedicated Christians—faithful workers in the Lord's vineyard. These men and women, whether native to British soil or transplanted from the United States, work week after week to combat the spiritual lethargy that a national religion breeds.

Work Being Hindered

A sad and regrettable situation has arisen to hinder the work in Great Britain. The fall of communism in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union has opened doors previously closed and locked to any Christian efforts, and God is to be praised for such a wonderful thing. However, money being given to missions in Russia and Eastern Europe, in too many instances, is being diverted from established works in Great Britain.

To be sure, one can understand why these newly opened doors are enticing to congregations wanting to do mission work. The work in Great Britain does not garner exciting reports of multitudes responding to gospel preaching, or of individuals approaching Christians on the streets with a request for Bible study. The work in Great Britain is a slower, more methodical effort, yielding fewer reportable results and at a slower pace. What must be remembered, however, is that even though the numbers may be comparatively low and they may come more slowly, the gospel is being preached, seed is being planted, and souls are being added to the Lord's church.

Support Needed

I know of faithful Christian families struggling to continue their ministries as a result of lost financial support. One missionary has been forced to return to secular teaching in order to make ends meet, and another must decide whether or not he can continue in his current ministry with decimated finances.

If there are any individuals or congregations willing to consider regular support for these capable, dedicated Christians (and others like them) who are in dire need of financial help, please feel free to contact me for additional information.

Conclusion

We may rest assured that there is good work being done for the Lord by many faithful Christians in Great Britain. I am reminded of an English couple who came to study the Bible because of their grandson; of a young mother who insisted she was an atheist until she realized the Bible offered much more than she had previously believed; of a denominational leader who, through study, came to the conclusion that his former beliefs were not according to biblical standards; of a science teacher who desired to hold tightly to his humanist thinking, but who is now beginning to realize the futility of such things; and of a mother and daughter who visited an evening service and had a desire stirred within them to know much, much more.

The work goes on, day by day, because the fields are ready for the harvest (Matt. 9:37,38). Indeed, the laborers are few. Far more are needed for the work in Great Britain. Sadly, some of the few laborers already in the field, ready and willing to harvest the planted seed, are being left with few resources with which to reap.

With your help the harvest in Great Britain that results from the proclamation of God's eternal Word will continue in full force.❑

Robert Curry preaches for the church in Duncan, SC. Contact him regarding this mission work at PO Box 728, Duncan, SC 29334.

A Second Look at Being Lukewarm

By Walter Wagner

"I KNOW THY WORKS, THAT THOU art neither cold nor hot: I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:15, 16).

The commentaries on these verses vary greatly. Mr. Erskine, in **Gospel Sonnets**, wrote "To good and evil equal bent, I am both a devil and a saint."

Adam Clarke, in his commentary, has "They were too good to go to hell, too bad to go to heaven."

Foy E. Wallace, Jr., in his book on Revelation, wrote "The purpose of the comparison is to rebuke lukewarmness which produces nausea."

B.W. Johnson, in **The People's New Testament With Notes**, has "Neither acting hostile to Christ, nor zealous for him."

Harper's Bible Dictionary, 1953 Edition, has "The baths at Hierapolis with its renowned hot water supply, (Rev. 3:14-16)."

The idea set forth in **Harper's Bible Dictionary** is closer to the true meaning of the expression "lukewarm" than all the others.

We begin the investigation of the background of the expression "lukewarm" with a look at Paul's letter to the church in Colosse. "For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis...And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea" (Col. 4:13–16).

All three towns (Colosse, Hierapolis, and Laodicea) were located on the Lyckus River. Laodicea was in the wide Meanderes River Valley just before the Lyckus feeds into the Meanderes. Colosse was southeast of Laodicea about twenty miles up the Lyckus River. Hierapolis was about 2,000 feet above Laodicea on a mountain ledge. Although it was six miles by road, the two towns were in sight of each other because of the elevation of Hierapolis. All three towns were in the province of Phrygia.

The events that made it possible for Christ to use the "hot, cold, lukewarm " lesson began about two years before Paul wrote the Colossian letter. In A.D. 60 all three towns were destroyed by a massive earthquake. Caesar Nero offered to help rebuild Laodicea because it was at the mouth of the wide, rich Meanderes River valley. The prosperity of this valley meant that those living in it could be taxed in order to recover the reconstruction expenses. However, the Laodiceans were wealthy and independent and refused Rome's offer to help. They considered themselves rich and in need of help from no one—not even God (Rev. 3:17).

Hierapolis above Laodicea

The white limestone and marble ruins of Colosse still lay where they fell in A.D. 60. Colosse was the first of the three cities to rebuild, but on a nearby site. Rather than the limestone and marble used to build the original city, the citizens of Colosse rebuilt their town with sun-baked bricks, the type of building material still used for low-cost farm homes in the area today. Colosse is now the town of Honaz.

Hierapolis, situated high on the mountain above Laodicea, was the last of the three cities to be rebuilt following the earthquake. There were a few shepherd homes put up in the meantime, but the city was not rebuilt. The reason for this will be explained later.

Laodicea began to rebuild quickly, but the process took longer than at Colosse because the Laodiceans rebuilt in the grand Roman style. Large cut stones that were faced with gleaming marble or limestone were used in the reconstruction. Laodicea was a rich city in a rich valley and its citizens wanted their city to reflect that wealth. This fertile Meanderes Valley produced all kinds of food stuffs, wool, dyes, and even a special plant used for medicinal purposes. The sap of this plant was dried into what was called "Phrygian powder." When this powder was mixed with water it became "eyesalve" (Rev. 3:18). After the city was rebuilt the city's water supply continued to be furnished by the Lyckus River. Today there is a Muslim village near the ruins of Laodicea called Eski Hisar.

Domitian (A.D. 81–96), the Roman ruler who exiled John to Patmos (Rev. 1:9), began the rebuilding of Hierapolis in A.D. 84. His purpose was to build a pleasure resort for the Roman elite. There are from 20 to 30 warm water springs that bubble-up near Hierapolis. These springs have brought calcium from deep within the mountain and have formed a great calcium ledge. This calcium ledge is 3/4 of a mile long and 1/2 mile wide with terraces and large pools of warm calcium water. (Back in the time of the Hittite nation [Gen. 15:20] the pagan priests used this mountain and the one across the valley for ancestor worship [Cf. Col. 2:18].) Throughout the centuries, these warm springs have been reputed to have healing qualities. Domitian rebuilt the city with luxury bathhouses, designed as pleasure and health spas.

Four of Domitian's great bathhouses remain today. The Romans had already designed flushable toilets by running a small stream of water underneath them. Remains of such toilets may be seen today, at Hierapolis, Sardis and Ephesus.

After the warm calcium water had washed the bodies of the Roman elite, it then was diverted under their toilets, removing the refuse. This combination of calcium, bathwater, and sewage emptied into the Lyckus River—Laodicea's water supply. This raw sewage in the town's water supply made many of the Laodiceans quite sick, with vomiting. The words of Revelation 3:16 "spew out" are translated from the Greek word **emeo** which means "to vomit." The Laodiceans complained to Rome regarding their contaminated water supply; however, Rome would not listen. The Roman elite would not give up their pleasure for the sake of an independent city that had refused assistance for rebuilding and had thus avoided paying taxes to Rome.

Today the remains of a four and one-half mile aqueduct still follow the ridges to springs at De'nezli. This aqueduct was built by the Laodiceans as a means of acquiring fresh water for their city. The water brought to the city via this aqueduct comes out of the ground at 120°F—hot water. As the water flowed over the aqueduct it cooled down. Both hot and cold are good qualities in water. They are not in opposition to one another where one is good and the other is bad.

In the letter to Laodicea, Jesus uses the circumstances round about to teach. The rich valley, the eyesalve, and the lukewarm, sewer water were object lessons intended to bring about repentance. Just as vomiting is a total rejection of what is inside the stomach, Christ said He would reject the Laodiceans from His body, the church, if they did not repent. This is in agreement with all other Scripture pertaining to those who rebel against the teaching of God's word.

Peter, who wrote to the same group of Christians a few years earlier (1 Pet. 1:1; 2 Pet. 3:1) also warned them that should they depart from the truth, their latter end would be worse than their former (2 Pet. 2:20–22).

Although Colosse remained in Phrygia, Hierapolis was included in the province of Asia by Domitian. This also included Laodicea, because it lies to the west of Hierapolis. When John wrote Revelation to the seven churches of Asia, Hierapolis apparently had no church, and likely the reason for that was that the land was reserved for the Roman elite.

When the Ottoman Turks invaded the valley in the thirteenth century, they saw the great white structure on the side of the mountain above the valley and thought it to be a castle. They knew that they would have to capture it if they were to control the valley below. They marched up the mountain in force only to find a great ledge of calcium, warm water springs and some ruins. (All three cities were destroyed by another earthquake in A.D. 494.) The white calcium looked like cotton and the ledge looked like a castle—which gives the present resort located there its name, Pamukkale. Pamuk means cotton and kale means castle. The great calcium ledge is still there today along with the warm pools of water, and first-class hotels where people come and wash in the calcium-rich, warm waters.

The lesson of Revelation 3:15,16 is not that lukewarm is the condition between hot and cold (i.e., worse than hot but better than cold). Rather, the background of the word "lukewarm" suggests rejection—a vomiting up—if repentance does not occur. This agrees with the words of Peter to the churches of Asia (1 Pet. 1:1; 2 Pet. 2:20–22). It also agrees with the teaching found in all other places in the word of God regarding those who fall away and do not repent and return to the Lord.

For more information on Hierapolis, Laodicea, and Colosse see Harper's Bible Dictionary, and two other books **Anatolia** and **Pamukkale** (Istanbul: Net Publishing Co.).❑

Walter Wagner preaches for the Slater-Marietta church in Slater, SC. He leads tours to the Bible Lands. See his ad on page 16 regarding the tour he plans for this Spring.

Why I Must Return

By Polly Poole

BECAUSE THE RELIGIOUS WORLD puts a mystical meaning on a trip to the Bible Lands, I was a bit skeptical about what I would see on my first trip. Actually, the expression "holy land" occurs one time in the Old Testament (Zech. 2:12), and that reference is to the land set aside for the children of Israel (including Jerusalem) following Babylonian captivity.

I went there to see biblical sites, and they unfolded before my eyes faster than I could take them in. The experience began at Joppa, the sea port city where Solomon received the cedar wood from Lebanon that went into the construction of the temple. Jonah fled for Tarshish in rebellion against God from here. The names Simon the tanner, Peter, and Dorcas filled my head, and I thought about Peter's vision as our bus passed through the narrow streets and along the shore of the light blue Mediterranean Sea.

When we arrived at Caesarea I realized that the topography of the land fit the events and places described in the Bible. We had just travelled the same road that Peter took when he went to see Cornelius. Caesarea was also the city where Paul was imprisoned for two years, and it was the home of Philip the evangelist, as well.

I was putting all these facts into my head as our bus climbed the south side of Mt. Carmel. We stopped at El Mugharah, or, "the place of burning." The caves nearby and the spring a few hundred feet away suggest that we are at the place where Elijah refuted the prophets of Baal. Before us was the beautiful, fertile Jezreel Valley with its thousands of years of history. There were more biblical sites than one could remember. The Kishon River and pass, the hills of lower Galilee, the city of Acco, the hill on which Nazareth is still located, the hill of Megiddo, Mt. Tabor the home of Deborah, and Mt. Moreh where Gideon defeated the Midianite army.

Our bus climbed the a steep hill with a cliff at the top. As we came to the summit, I thought of the events of Luke 4. Verse 29 says that the Jews who heard Jesus' sermon in the synagogue "drove him out of town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff." This means that Nazareth was built on a hill with a cliff steep enough to kill someone cast over the hill. On that occasion Jesus escaped into the crowd, but Nazareth still sits on a hill with a cliff that would kill anyone who went over the edge. Again, I realized that the land was confirming the Scriptures. That hill and cliff are right on the edge of Nazareth—just as they were when the Jews attempted their evil deed.

The entire five-mile width of the Sea of Galilee turned a bright crimson in the morning sun. Since I go to work early each morning, I often see the sun coming up; but this was different. The Sea of Galilee is almost 700 feet below sea level and a gentle breeze pushes up waves that look like ribbons of fire dancing on the water. I thought of how many times our Lord and His apostles sat on the shore and watched as the bright red waters turned to a pure light blue as the sun climbed higher into the sky.

Biblical sites surrounded me as I watched those hills. Tiberias, Beth Arbel, Magdala—the home of Mary, the hills of lower and upper Galilee, the plain of Bethsaida, the plain of Genesaret, the feeding of the multitude, the Gadarenes and the Decapolis. But one place stood out: the remains of Capernaum. Here was a city that was so blessed as to be chosen by Christ as His home city, but it was also a city cursed because it rejected Him (Matt. 11:20-24). Although some Jews attempted to rebuild the city in the fourth century, it remains in ruins today. Again, the land cries out that the Bible is true.

We followed the rich Jordan Valley to the south with the Jordan River on our left and arrived at Beth-shean and Mt. Gilboa. This is site of Tell el-Hosn. King Saul died on Mt. Gilboa. Following his death the Philistines cut off his head and stripped him of his armor. 1 Samuel 31:10 states, "They put his armor in the temple of the Ashtoreths and fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan." Excavations at Tell el-Hosn have uncovered two temples which have been suggested to be the temples of Dagon and Ashteroth. The temple site is still there, but the wall where his body was hanged is gone.

We continued to travel down the valley past Jericho and then up the road from Jericho to Jerusalem.

Jerusalem. Oh, the volumes that could be written about that city. I mention only the sites that were there before the massive destruction in A.D. 70. To the north of the city is the place of the skull which dates to the time of Solomon. Then there is the pool of Bethsaida, the Kidron valley, the Mount of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Valley of Hinnom, the Western Wall (of the temple) with its Herodian stones (known today as the "Wailing Wall"), and Mt. Zion. In the city is a street called The Chain Street, and, as you walk along it, you can see Roman columns around the foot of Mt. Zion. On the south side of the mount is a row of first-century steps leading past the home of Caiaphas, the High Priest at the time of Christ.

A family of Ibex—wild goats—leaps over the desert floor as we drive along side the Dead

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Sea. The sea is dead—it has no life in it. The desert will not support life; and we are 1315 feet below sea level. The Ibex are going to the same place as we: En Gedi. En Gedi means "the spring of the kid goat." The springs at En Gedi rush out of the desert hills and form a pond of still waters. These still waters support all kinds of food items all year around. This is the area to which David fled to escape King Saul's attempts on his life. It is in the deepest valley on earth. It is in an otherwise dead valley. Walking through this valley is like walking through the valley of the shadow of death. But, at En Gedi, the still waters produce green pastures and a prepared table the whole year through. In this area Psalm 23 is all around you.

The psalmist David also wrote Psalm 19:1-3, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard."

These experiences have enriched my life so much that I must return and take my family with me. I want them to hear that "world" declare that there is a God in heaven and that His word is true.❑

Polly made her trip to the Bible Lands with Walter Wagner as Tour Director. Brother Wagner will be leading another tour this Spring. Contact him for details.

What ..."For The Faith"? A Reply to *"Contending for the Faith," Studies in Jude*

By Jack Simons

I AM WRITING IN REPLY TO THE September 1993 issue of **Carolina Christian** in which the book of Jude was reviewed by several of our brethren. It seems the book of Jude has been misinterpreted in having us believe that Jude's admonition "earnestly contend for the faith" in no way suggested combative confrontation with anyone. Rather, it simply implied we take care to maintain our own personal purity of faith. This reply, then, is because I feel, in light of Scripture, that the teachings of Jude, especially verse three, have been misrepresented.

One writer begins the review of the book of Jude on page five by stating "the letter almost didn't make it into the canon." This could be said of several other books of the New Testament, but to what point? Is this an apology for the presence of this book in Holy Writ?

Consider his explanation of verse three. It is asserted that the Greek word for "contend" (**epagonizomai**) "was a metaphor common to the athletic contests of the Greek games. The compound form of the word (**epi + agonizomai**) does not strengthen the meaning, as 'earnestly contend' in the KJV suggests, but was equivalent to the uncompounded form with the same meaning (Bauckham, p. 31,32). The athletic metaphor, then, should not be pressed to justify aggression or combativeness in any form." If anyone has ever wrestled, they should realize it is a **combat** sport involving at least two people earnestly struggling to overpower and defeat the other! Sometimes it can result in broken bones, crippling disabilities, or even death. W. E. Vine (**An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words**, 1940) comments on this word: "EPAGONIZOMAI...signifies to contend about a thing, as a combatant (*epi,* upon or about, intensive, *agon*, a contest), to contend earnestly, Jude 3. The word 'earnestly' is added to convey the intensive force of the preposition" (p. 235). J. H. Thayer (**Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon**, 2nd Edition, 1889, a translation of the second edition of *Lexicon Graeco-Latinum in libros Novi Testamanti*, 1879 by Christian Gottlob Wilke and Karl Ludwig Willibald Grimm) defines it "to contend" likening it to combat in war! (p. 227).

The article states further on page nine, "'Contending' was a metaphor growing out of athletic contests—used to encourage athletes to continue. Should this verse be used in an attempt to justify slanderous and libelous name-calling, then Jude's (and God's) intent would be missed. Jude's purpose in urging the brethren to 'contend for the faith' was to keep churches together. It is a sad irony that some would run the risk of promoting the alienation of brothers and sisters by 'contending' in such away as to draw lines and choose sides (which, by the way, was the strategy of the intruders [v.19]!)."

The wrong book has been chosen to make such a statement! Notice the terminology in verses 4–16 where Jude calls the false teachers he is opposing **"filthy dreamers," "clouds...without water," "trees whose fruit withereth," "twice dead, plucked up by the roots," "raging waves of the sea," "wandering stars," "murmurers"** and **"complainers."** Could this have offended them? Jude also drew some lines by marking the **"Spots"** in their love feasts in contrast with those who were not (v. 12). Could this have run the risk of alienating brethren? Indeed, it was the false teachers who were separating themselves from truth and the saved, but Jude urged those to whom he wrote to mark them for what they were, contend with them, compassionately restore those they could, and separate themselves from those they couldn't!

Certainly, Jude wrote to keep churches together, but to do so he knew those who would divide it had to be earnestly contended with and stopped. Consider also Romans 16:17–18 and 1 Corinthians 1:10.

On page seven another writer states, "It is tempting to identify apostates and occasions of apostasy in terms of specific teachings and/or conduct, to do so is to miss out on the essential characteristic of all apostasy. Furthermore, it is to risk making false accusations of apostasy, or overlooking actual instances of apostasy in the lives of others, including ourselves." To fail to **specifically** identify apostates in terms of "specific teachings and/or conduct" is to risk making false accusations by overlooking the actual instances of their apostasy, or the possibility of condoning or becoming party to it!

On pages 14–16 another writer cites Fosdick who said "We defend religion too much." It is my opinion we do just the opposite. What is the desired effect of such a statement? Consider his quote from Russell: "Few people can be happy unless they hate some other person, nation, or creed." This is a serious indictment of the human race, including most who read his article. He then states: "People long to be superior to others and nothing fulfills that desire more effectively than a good battle with an enemy." I hate no person, including the writers of this issue I am differing with, nor any nation. I do, however, hate creeds of men and "every false way" (Psalm 119:104, 128)! I am most disheartened to have to reply to this issue. I find no joy in it whatsoever, nor does it make me feel superior, nor is any desire to do battle with an enemy **or brother** fulfilled. But I am pressed to make this reply for the sake of truth.

This same writer then states: "Though it is a remarkable thing that Christianity has survived the attacks of its enemies, it is even more remarkable that it has survived its well-meaning defenders. Pugnacious, combative people do little to confirm the message that God is love, or to inspire others to humbly carry a cross. Yet, the message seems to triumph in spite of them, for great truth is always more powerful than the arguments that surround it." It is not remarkable to me that Christianity has survived all attacks against it, because its power to survive is of God, not man! Shall we so accuse Paul of being "well-meaning," but doing "little to confirm the message that God is love, or to inspire others to humbly carry a cross," for disputing often with Judaizing brethren as well as ungodly antagonists many times during his ministry? Paul even withstood Peter to the face for unchristian-like actions (Gal. 2:11). Paul declared in Philippians 1:17, "I am set for the defense of the gospel." In doing these things Paul did much to confirm God's message of love and promote humble cross-bearing! **(Paul even wrote 1 Corinthians 1:1–18 and chapter 13!)**

I agree with this brother that we must "contend" without being "contentious," but it is not being contentious when we expose and refute false doctrine that will divide the church of God and endanger precious souls; so long as we do so in love for God, truth, those who espouse false teachings and those they lead astray! Just consider how pugnaciously and combatively Jude attacked the false teachers he was endeavoring to expose and refute! **(Read the letter again!)**

How could we write about Jude, and "**earnestly contend for the faith**" and conclude it does not mean to be combative in any form? The true intent of this book is: To expose false teachers, urge those to whom it was written to "earnestly contend for the faith" by combatively opposing them, and to keep the faith pure, not only in their own hearts, but in the hearts of others also, even to the restoration of those same false teachers, if possible!

I make this response without animosity toward any. Rather, I do so with love and concern for truth and the church of the living God (1 Tim. 3:15).❑

Jack Simons preaches for the Warners Chapel church in Clemmons, NC. Contact him at 8998 Lasater Rd., Clemmons, NC 27012

Brotherhood News

By Michael R. Mobley

MONROE, NC...The Walkup Avenue church announces its Second Annual Men's Day, January 15, 1994 with Craig Hinrichs, Tom Bolick and Bob Rigdon. The theme is "Love God, Love Your Neighbor, and Love Yourself." STATESVILLE, NC...The Northview church announces its Second Annual Ladies Retreat, April 8-9, 1994. CHARLOTTE, NC...The Archdale church has recently appointed Ron Deffenbaugh and Russ McCullough and Ronnie Shane as deacons. MOCKSVILLE, NC...Carolina Bible Camp is pleased to announce the schedule for its 1994 encampment. The summer camp season will open June 19 and will close August 6. The weekly schedule will be as follows: June 19-25, Work Week, David Allgood, Director (Seniors Only); June 26-July 2, Dennis Conner, Director (Seniors Only); July 3-9, Bill Voss, Director (Juniors and Seniors); July 10-16, Wilson Burton, Director (Juniors and Seniors); July 17-23, Dennis Conner, Director (Seniors Only); July 24-30, Steve Guy, Director (Juniors Only); July 31-August 6, Kirk Sams, Director (Juniors Only). Juniors are campers ages 9 to 12 and Seniors are campers ages 13 to 18. CHARLESTON, SC...The Essex Village church announces its 1994 Ladies Day, April 23, with Doris Black. The theme is "What Every Woman Needs to Know."❑

Send News Items to Michael R. Mobley, PO Box 312, Mooresville, NC 28115-0312..

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

VOL. 36, NO. 2 FEBRUARY 1994

Ground Breaking
Friendly Avenue Church of Christ, Greensboro, NC
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Carolina Christian

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Editorial

By Johnny R. Melton

OUR COVER FEATURES THE GROUND Breaking for an addition to the facility that houses the Friendly Avenue church in Greensboro, NC. Friendly Avenue has enjoyed remarkable growth in her twenty-five-year history. The success that has been enjoyed is due to diligent and prudent leadership. The Friendly eldership is devout and God-fearing, committed to the truth and sensitive to the needs of people. Deacons at Friendly lead ministry teams with enthusiasm and diligence. Ron Newberry is the talented and dedicated pulpit minister keeping Friendly focused on "Life in the Son."

Friendly Avenue's success is a clear demonstration that churches of Christ can grow in the Carolinas. **Carolina Christian** is happy to salute the family of God at Friendly Avenue and to wish them well in their work for the Lord.

Studies in Obadiah

The September 1993 issue of **Carolina Christian** carried an announcement of our intention to follow up the series of special studies of one-chapter books of the New Testament with a study of Obadiah (the Old Testament's one-chapter book). Paul Watson, an accomplished Old Testament scholar, serves the Cole Mill Road church in Durham, NC as both an elder and pulpit minister has undertaken that task in this issue. Paul provides an overview of Obadiah's prophesy and useful insight into its basic message.

Tim Sensing, our Book Review editor, has provided a reading list on Obadiah that will prove helpful for future study.

I am grateful for the work that Paul and Tim did for this issue of **Carolina Christian**.

Directory Update

For many years **Carolina Christian** has published a *Directory of Churches of Christ in the Carolinas*. The last version of the Directory was published in 1990. It is time to update the Directory.

Jerry Senn, managing editor for **Carolina Christian**, is spearheading the update effort. A questionnaire has been sent to all known congregations of churches of Christ in North and South Carolina. It is our desire to provide a Directory that is as current as possible and that will be a useful tool for inter-congregational communications.

The Directory will be available in April and will sell for $3.00. Pre-publication orders are being taken at $2.50 each for 1–4, or $2.00 each for five or more. Send orders to Jerry Senn, 1975 Haywood Road, Hendersonville, NC 28739.

Coming in March

Tim Sensing has guest edited a series of articles on Congregational Leadership that will appear in the March issue of **Carolina Christian**. An interview with the elders of the Northview church in Statesville, NC will highlight the issue. This issue could easily serve as the basis for a Bible Class study on Leadership. Additional copies of the issue are available for 50¢ per copy (plus postage) while our supply lasts. Send requests to Johnny Melton, RR 2 Box 137, Conover, NC 28613-9609.

Love the Brotherhood

The word "brotherhood" occurs twice in the New Testament. Both occurrences are in Peter's first epistle. The word translated brothers, or brethren is **adelphoi** the plural of **adelphos** and it is masculine in gender. The word for brotherhood is **adelphotes**, and it is feminine gender, singular in number.

There are two things that Peter says about the brotherhood. In 1 Peter 5:9, while calling for humility before God and courage in the face of Satan's opposition, Peter encourages individual Christians to stand firm in the faith because the brotherhood in the world will undergo the same kind of suffering. This passage calls for individual commitment in light of what is in store for the brotherhood. It does not contain any exhortation for the brotherhood directly. Nor does it contain any word to individual Christians concerning what they are to do to the brotherhood.

The second occurrence of **adelphotes** is 1 Peter 2:17. This verse is in the context of a series of duties enjoined by Peter upon individual Christians. The list of duties is similar to "household codes" found in the secular literature of the first century. It is also reminiscent of similar lists in Paul's letters.

The pertinent passage declares "Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king." The word love is a present imperative, second person, plural of **agapao**. (You, plural) love the brotherhood.

This is the only direct command in the New Testament regarding our relationship to the brotherhood. What does love the brotherhood mean? Agape is described as seeking another's good. It is unconditional love in action. Paul described it succinctly: "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" (1 Cor. 13:4–7).

February, the love month, is an excellent time to reaffirm our love for the brotherhood.❑

Associate Editorial

Bible Study Helps, No. 5

By Jim Mullican

BIBLES ARE AVAILABLE IN MANY different formats. For those with special needs and physical limitations, there are large print Bibles, Braille Bibles, and Bibles on cassette tape. Bibles are even available on computer disks for those who prefer it, and on microfilm for those who prefer to carry ten thousand volumes in a shoe box. Each of these serves a purpose, but most of us prefer a standard printed Bible.

Even here, there are many differences to consider. Bibles range in price from $2 to $100 or more, depending on whether they contain only the biblical text in an inexpensive paperback binding or have additional features in a good leather binding. A good study Bible will fall somewhere between these two price extremes, and is one of the most helpful study tools for the average Christian, and for the preacher and teacher.

Study Bibles

A good study Bible will always have cross-references to other related passages. It will have a partial concordance, and perhaps a Bible dictionary. Many have a brief commentary or explanation of difficult words or passages. Of course, these are not inspired and while usually reliable, may not always be trustworthy. Maps are another helpful feature, and there may also be an introduction to each book as well as an outline. To get the most out of Bible study, a good study Bible is a wise investment.

For those interested in purchasing one, the *Harper Study Bible* and the *Zondervan Study Bible* are both excellent. Good study Bibles are available in most major translations, including the King James Version, the New King James Version, the New American Standard Bible, the New International Version, and the New Revised Standard Version.

Versions of the Bible

The value of different versions of the Bible is an emotional issue for some. There are those who will not allow anything but the King James Version in their houses or church buildings. There are others who would not invite a preacher to speak if he used the King James Version. Both attitudes are equally wrong, and those who hold them need to study Romans 14 carefully, in whatever version they prefer.

The King James Version has served well for nearly four centuries. It has both strengths and weaknesses. Its language is stately and dignified, and much early memory work may have been done in it. Sometimes it is clearer than other versions, as when Jesus says in Luke 22:31,32, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy strength fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." In modern English, "you" can mean one or many, but in 1611, "you" meant many and "thee" and "thou" meant only one. Satan wanted all the apostles, but Jesus prayed for Peter. This point is clear in the Greek text and in the KJV, but not in most modern translations.

However, the weaknesses of the KJV may outweigh its strengths. It contains many passages not found in the older Greek manuscripts. It obscures ties between the Old and New Testaments. For instance, in the KJV the Old Testament characters Terah, Isaiah, and Elijah when referred to in the New Testament are called Thara, Esaias, and Elias. The main problem, though, is the difference between its archaic language and our way of speaking. Those brought up on it probably can cope with the obsolete terms, but most misunderstand it more than they realize.

The real cause for concern comes when people judge the Bible to be irrelevant today due to obsolete language. God originally gave the Scriptures in the common language of the man on the street, so that it could be readily understood by all.

This is the reason why good modern versions are important. If translated well, they do what the original New Testament did—they present the word of God to ordinary people in their own language. Some modern translations are better than others. The New American Standard Version and the Revised Standard Version are both more literal translations than the New International Version, but the NIV is outselling them and is even outselling the KJV, the first time any other version has achieved such singular status. It appears that the NIV may become the standard English Bible in years to come.

All should read and study the Bible, and any version is better than none. The best way to benefit from the different versions available is to read each passage from two or three versions. This is probably the next-best thing to reading Greek and Hebrew. It enables the reader to see the various possible meanings in a word or phrase. Parallel Bibles, which print several translations in parallel columns are one of the best ways to do this. *The Bible from 26 Translations* prints the King James Version on every verse, with several other translations, chosen for how they bring out alternate meanings of the words.❑

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The Book of Obadiah

By Paul Watson

PREVIOUS ISSUES OF **CAROLINA Christian** have featured the one-chapter books of the New Testament. This article will explore the only single-chapter book of the Old Testament, the book of the prophet Obadiah. The name "Obadiah" was a popular Hebrew name given to at least eleven different individuals in the Old Testament; it means "servant-of-God." The exact identity of the prophet Obadiah cannot be determined. That Obadiah "served God" by communicating a message of God's righteous judgment and God's redeeming grace cannot be denied.

Historical Background

At the center of attention in Obadiah are the Edomites (v. 1), descendants of Abraham and Isaac through Esau (v. 6). The relationship of Edom and Israel is much like that of Jacob and Esau: sometimes peaceful, often stormy, occasionally violent. That relationship extends from the lifetime of the two brothers throughout the Old Testament period and down into New Testament times, where Herod the Great is a distant relative of Esau.

The joint history of Edom with Israel may be sketched out as follows: From the very beginning, Esau/Edom (the name means "red") and Jacob/Israel were in competition with each other, as the stories of their birth (Gen. 25:19-26), Esau's 'stolen' birthright (Gen. 25:27-34) and Isaac's blessing (Gen. 27:1-45) indicate. The twins ultimately parted on more-or-less friendly terms, with Esau moving to Seir in Edom, a harsh, elevated wilderness area southeast of Judah across the Dead Sea (Gen. 32-33, 36; note that Yahweh himself is associated with Seir in Deut. 33:2 and Judg. 5:4). Subsequent contacts between their respective descendants were strained and often bitter.

Edom denied Moses and Israel the right to cross Edomite territory as Israel traveled to the Promised Land (Num. 20:14-21). Much later David conquered and occupied Edom in a particularly brutal way (2 Sam. 8:13-14; 1 Kings 11:15-16). About 849 B.C., the king of Edom actually joined kings Jehoram of Israel and Jehoshaphat of Judah in alliance against Moab (2 Kings 3:1-27; also described on the famous "Moabite Stone"). Shortly thereafter Edom turned against Jehoram of Judah in a successful rebellion (2 Kings 8:20-22). Amaziah of Judah (800-783 B.C.) retook Edom and Sela, its capital, committing another atrocity in the process (2 Kings 14:7; 2 Chron. 25:11-12). Edom returned the favor when they "invaded and defeated Judah and carried away captives" in the days of Ahaz, 735-715 B.C. (2 Chron. 28:16-19), also recovering the seaport city of Elath/Ezion-geber on the Gulf of Aqabah (2 Kings 16:6).

Judah's greatest crisis came shortly after 600 B.C., when the Babylonians first quelled a rebellion there (598-97 B.C.), then destroyed Jerusalem and its temple after another uprising (587 B.C.). Edom's role in those days is not entirely clear. On the one hand, Edom was also under Babylon's "yoke" (Jer. 27:3) and is conspicuously absent from the list of Judah's neighbors who aided Babylon in 598-97 B.C. (2 Kings 24:1). On the other hand, such passages as Psalm 137:7, Lamentations 4:21, and Ezekiel 25:12 seem clearly to indicate that Edom aided and abetted Nebuchadnezzer and the Babylonians in destroying Jerusalem.

In any event, Edom eventually moved into the Negeb region due south of Judah, (Jer. 49:7-22 and Ezek. 35:1-15); while the Nabateans, an Arab group from the desert, occupied the older territory of Edom and made the rock fortress of Petra their capital. Edom's new territory in southern Judah came to be called Idumea. In the first century B.C., Antipater, governor of Idumea, assumed practical control of Palestine through his support of Julius Caesar. Antipater's son, Herod the Great, subsequently became 'king' of Palestine and was in power when Jesus was born (Matt. 2:1).

Thus it is to the Edomites and their perfidy that the message of Obadiah is addressed, at least initially: "Thus says the Lord God concerning Edom..." (v. 1). It is not clear, however, precisely which instance of Edom's treachery is being denounced; indeed, it may be the cumulative behavior of Edom that calls for these words of condemnation. If any single event is envisioned, most scholars agree it is the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and Edom's role therein.

The Book of Obadiah

A close examination of the book of Obadiah reveals five distinct units of material. How these units relate to one another, and how any one unit relates to oracles in other prophetic books, are matters to be taken up subsequently. First attention will be given to the individual units themselves.

Unit I (vv. 1-4): *A call-to-arms against Edom.* The very first words, "the vision of Obadiah", are a superscription to the entire book. (cf. Nah. 1:1). The unit itself clearly begins with "Thus says the LORD..." (v. 1) and ends with "...says the LORD" (v. 4, although some would add v. 5 as well). God has sent a messenger to "the nations" to raise an army against Edom (v. 1). Edom believes herself inviolable (v. 3); but God will "make small" (v. 2) and "bring down" (v. 4) Edom and all her lofty pretensions. The word "rock" in v. 3 is Hebrew **sela‘** which is also the name for the Edomite capital. It was in fact a mountain fortress, an "eagle's nest" (v. 4); but it was not beyond God's reach or power. The smug question of verse 3 is intended to be rhetorical: "who will bring me down to the ground?" God turns it into a real question, with a decisive answer: "thence I will bring you down" (v. 4).

Unit II (vv. 5-10): *Edom's certain, total devastation.* This section is less cohesive than the first; nevertheless, in a rich variety of images and rhetorical structures, the completeness of Edom's destruction is made clear. Verses 5-6 suggest that, while robbers and poachers might leave something behind them after their incursions, Edom's invaders will clean her out (taking the verbs in v. 6 as "prophetic perfects"). Nor can Edom find help from her "friends"; she has no friends (v. 7). Edom had been known both for the sagacity of her wise men (v. 8; cf. Eliphaz the Temanite, Job 2:11) and the toughness of her troops (v. 9); neither will sustain her "on that day." The wrongs done "to your brother Jacob" have sealed Edom's doom (v. 10, reminiscent of Cain and Abel in Gen. 4:1-16).

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Unit III (vv. 11-14, 15b): *A litany of Edom's misdeeds.* This unit is closely linked to Unit II (vv. 5-10); indeed, some think verse 10 should be the first verse of unit III rather than the last verse of unit II. Whereas unit II elaborates Edom's doom, unit III specifies Edom's crimes. "On the day that..." (v. 11) reminds Edom of her past and links that past to God's coming "day" of judgment (v. 8). The charges are clear. Edom did not initiate hostile action against Judah. Instead, she was a bystander, but hardly an innocent one. Edom allowed Judah's enemy (presumably Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar) to enter Jerusalem unchallenged (v. 11). Edom gloated over Judah's misfortune, and boasted of her safety (v.12). After the battle was over, Edom slipped into Jerusalem and looted what was left (v. 13). Instead of helping Judah's survivors to escape, Edom caught them and turned them over to the victors (v. 14). For all of this Edom shall receive just retribution: "As you have done, it shall be done to you..." (v. 15b, anticipating Matt. 7:12).

Unit IV (vv. 15a, 16-18): *The extension of God's judgment to all the nations.* Here a noticeable shift occurs in Obadiah's words. Whereas "the nations" have been the **agents** of God's vengeance (v. 1,2), now they are the **objects** of that vengeance (vv. 15,16). God's people, once exiled from Jerusalem/Zion (vv. 11,14), now escape to it (v. 17) and rule from it (v. 21). Obadiah's message thus falls into two main parts (vv. 1-14, 15b; and vv. 16-21), linked by "the day of the LORD" metaphor (v. 15a). This traditional prophetic motif (Amos 5:18-20; Zeph. 1:14-18; Joel 2:11, 3:14) apparently goes back to the time of Joshua and the institution of the "Holy War," and refers to God's invincible power which dispatches all of His (and Israel's) foes. By that power, Mount Zion shall be holy once again (v. 17a); the people of God shall regain what they had lost (v. 17b); and their survivors shall leave Esau/Edom with no survivors (v. 18; cf. v. 14).

Unit V (vv. 19-21): *A complete reversal of Israel's fortunes.* Verses 19-20 spell out in great geographical detail "who gets what." The cumulative effect is that of complete resettlement of the land of Israel. Verse 20a is not altogether clear: Either "saviors, deliverers" (Hebrew text) or "those who have been saved, delivered" (some Greek manuscripts) will repossess Mount Zion. In either case, v. 20b is clear: God's kingdom (i.e. universal rule) shall there be established (cf. Pss. 22:28; 103:19).

To return to the interrelatedness of these five units, and what they have in common with other prophetic texts: It has long been noted that Obadiah 1-5 is very similar to Jeremiah 49:14-16; 9. Indeed, Obadiah as a whole parallels Jeremiah 49:7-22 as a collection of oracles against Edom. Other suggested parallels, include Obadiah 11 and Joel 3:3; Obadiah 17 and Joel 2:32; and Obadiah 19-21 and Zechariah 14; and Obadiah in general and Ezekiel 35 and Malachi 1:2-5. All of this may best be explained by Obadiah's sharing with the other prophets a common body of traditional sayings and motifs that are sometimes virtually identical (cf. Isa. 2:24 and Micah 4:1-4), sometimes only similar. Furthermore, Obadiah may well have spoken his oracles (the five units delineated above) at different times or in different situations. Now, however, these oracles come to us as an ordered whole, moving from God's punishment of one specific enemy (Edom) to God's general triumph over all His enemies; and moving from Judah's abasement before her foes to her complete vindication by God.

The Message of Obadiah

If it is correct to speak of the message of Obadiah, surely that message focuses ultimately, not on Edom or Judah, but on God. In the clearest possible way and in the strongest possible language Obadiah affirms "Thy will be done." From the unambiguous threats of verses 2 and 4: "Behold, I will make you small among the nations...I will bring you down", to the equally unambiguous promise of verse 21; "...and the kingdom shall be the Lord's." It is God who rules, God whose will prevails.

That was not a new message by any means, for it had been sounded by many before Obadiah's day and would be taken up by many after his time, including the Lord himself (e.g., Matt. 4:1-11; 6:10; 21:42-44). Why that message was needed again, and is needed as much today as ever, is illustrated by the respective situations of Edom and Judah.

Edom had experienced temporary success from her wickedness. Granted, it had not been the calculated cruelty of the Assyrians and Babylonians but the opportunistic evil of a bystander who took selfish advantage of unfolding events. Along with Edom's opportunism came aloofness, gloating and boasting, based on their intelligence (v. 8), strength (v. 9), alliances (v. 7) and lofty fortifications (v. 3a). With insufferable smugness Edom asked, "Who will bring me down to the ground?" Nevertheless, such opportunism inflicted additional suffering on a victim and a "brother."

In effect, Edom had become prideful and self-idolatrous, not unlike those who began to build the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9) or the "rich fool" of Jesus' parable (Luke 12:16-20). Idolatry in any form, of course, is a challenge to God's sovereignty; and it will not go unanswered. God shall prevail, which means that evil, and evildoers, will fail. Is such divine retribution harsh or unfair? By no means. To say otherwise would be to question God's sovereignty and impugn His righteousness. Thus, as Stephen Winward has put it, "The message of Obadiah as a whole is a corrective both to the sentimentality and to the individualism of the present age" (**A Guide to the Prophets**, p. 214).

If Edom's success was only temporary, so also was Judah's suffering. As God brought Edom down, so He would lift Judah up. Note that Judah is not exonerated; verse 16 suggests she had drunk from the same cup of judgment that "all nations" would soon drink from (cf. Isa. 40:3; 51:17-23). Nor will Judah turn things around on her own. Judah's restoration, like Edom's punishment, would be God's doing. The essence of her salvation would, in fact, be a restoration of her holiness (v. 17); and the new kingdom would not be hers, but God's (v. 21b).

The message of judgment upon sin, as represented by Edom, and mercy on those who have sinned, as represented by Judah, are thus two sides of the same coin for Obadiah, that 'coin' being the reality and nature of God. Such a message is very old, but ever new. We are indebted to Obadiah, "Servant-of-God," for resounding it for us.

For Further Study

In addition to the books listed in this issue's book review section, the following may also be consulted with profit: Childs, B.S. **Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture**. Fortress, 1979; pp. 411-416. Mason, Rex. **Micah, Nahum, Obadiah**. JSOT Press, 1991, pp. 85-108. Newsome, James D, Jr. **The Hebrew Prophets**. John Knox Press, 1984, pp. 180-183. Winward, Stephen. **A Guide to the Prophets**. John Knox Press, 1976, pp. 211-215.□

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Book Reviews

By Tim Sensing

SEVERAL IN OUR FELLOWSHIP HAVE written on Obadiah in the framework of larger works. The following summaries will give only a small sampling and overview of these books and how they individually deal with Obadiah.

Lewis, Jack P. **Minor Prophets**. The Living Word Series. Austin, TX: Sweet Publishing Company, 1966.

This was my first workbook on the Minor Prophets and still serves as a standard in our fellowship. Lewis organizes his chapter on Obadiah around these subject headings: The Prophet; Literary Relations; Edom and Israel; The Message; Great Lessons of the Prophet; and Discussion.

Hailey, Homer. **A Commentary on the Minor Prophets**. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1972.

Hailey offers the only complete verse by verse exposition of the minor prophets (in one volume) available in our brotherhood. Each book has its own introduction dealing with authorship, date, historical backgrounds, message, lessons, and outline. In chapter 1, Hailey's introduction deals primarily with the dating of Obadiah. If you want insights about a particular verse, phrase, or word, then this volume is valuable.

Pharr, David. **Modern Messages From the Minor Prophets**. Abilene, TX: Quality Publications, 1986.

A series of 43 lessons on the minor prophets. Each lesson follows an Introduction/Body/Conclusion format. There are two lessons on Obadiah, both of which are helpful: "A Twelve Hundred Year Feud" and "Standing on the Other Side."

Willis, John T. **My Servants the Prophets**. The Way of Life Series, No. 116-118. Abilene, TX: Biblical Research Press, 1971.

Willis gives a brief overview of both major and minor prophets. Volume 1 primarily deals with the nature of prophecy. Included are chapters on Jonah, Hosea, and Amos. Volume 2 exclusively deals with Isaiah and Micah. Volume 3 surveys Jeremiah, with one chapter devoted to Zephaniah and Nahum together. Obadiah is omitted. The introductory lessons on prophecy will communicate well in an adult classroom setting. This material is essential for a complete understanding of the prophetic literature. Each volume contains thirteen lessons that are followed by discussion questions.

Meadows, James. **A Study of the Minor Prophets**. Montgomery, AL: Bible & School Supply, 1976.

Meadows offers fourteen fill-in-the-blank study sheets. Each lesson begins with a brief introduction and outline. He includes how each book was used in the New Testament. The questions are factual in nature and familiarize the student with the content of each book. Lesson 5, on Obadiah, is one of the longer sections. Meadows adds a section entitled, "Practical lessons from the prophet Obadiah."

A few technical works necessary for deeper study are:

Limburg, James. **Hosea-Micah**. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1986.

Achtemeier, Elizabeth. **Nahum-Malachi**. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1986.

The *Interpretation* series lives up to its billing as a commentary for teaching and preaching. The biblical text is discussed unit-by-unit rather than verse-by-verse, both from a literary and a historical perspective. Both Limburg and Achtemeier bring careful scholarship to their discussions and write with the preacher in mind as he prepares practical lessons for the congregation. Obadiah is found in Limburg's volume.

Wolff, Hans Welter. **Obadiah and Jonah: A Commentary**. Translated by Margaret Kohl. Augsburg Publishing House, 1986.

Although most in our fellowship are at odds with German critical methods, Wolff's volume is a good model of how these methodologies (both source and form criticism) can be used in a profitable way to draw many conservative conclusions. Wolff characterizes Obadiah as a collector of sayings who gives them topical applications. The commentary is organized as follows: Textual (extensive notes explaining the original language); Setting; Commentary; and Purpose (usually a Christological interpretation and an application to the church today). Each section contains an exhaustive bibliography for further study.

Allen, Leslie C. **The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah**. New International Critical Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976.

Allen offers a technical and conservative commentary that is very readable. He gives a thorough discussion of the historical backgrounds and meanings of Hebrew words. Allen is very familiar with scholarly research and offers detailed footnotes for those who desire further investigation. By far the greatest asset that Allen offers in this book is his enlightening discussion of the poetic structure of Obadiah. Often in translation the strophical structure of a work is lost. Allen analyzes not only the book as a literary whole but also each stanza and line. There is also an excellent section on canonicity found in his discussion of Joel. Many recurring motifs and forms find their fullest treatment in his discussion of Micah.

Craigie, Peter. **Twelve Minor Prophets**. Daily Study Bible Volume I. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984.

Craigie gives a brief discussion of each prophet usually emphasizing only one interpretive perspective. He offers clear summaries of the message of each book. Historical and geographical details are not overlooked. Craigie

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concludes each section with a good summary of the overall theological message.

After surveying these books on the minor prophets, I would recommend several of them for various purposes. If I wanted a technical work that would help me with the original languages, I would choose Wolff's commentary. Allen's work would be a distant second. If I wanted a commentary that emphasized practical applications and insights for preaching, I would opt for Limburg's. If I were teaching a class or recommending a volume for one of our adult Bible classes, I would not hesitate to use any of the volumes from our fellowship.❑

Tim Sensing, PO Box 1861, Mebane Street Church of Christ, Burlington, NC 27216-1861.

Let the Congregation Say "Amen"

By Don Utley

ONE OF MY MINISTRY SCHOOL PROfessors once asked the class, "What is a congregation member's job during a public prayer?" The answer: saying "Amen" at the end. For the rest of the class period, each of his students was asked to reflect on the practice of the "Amen."

My professor asserted that there were two types of congregations: those who "Amen" a lot and those who don't. He observed that some congregations energetically respond with aloud "Amen" at the end of prayers or during sermons. For perhaps cultural or sociological reasons, others are reserved about verbal responses of any kind during the worship service.Like many, I had worshipped in both settings and knew that there were differences in energy levels of the services. But until my professor asked his question, I had seldom reflected upon the practice of "Amen-ing."

At my home congregation we would "Amen" at the end of prayers,and I did it along with everyone else; but it seemed to me little more than an elevated "gesundheit" at the end of each"in Jesus' Name." I had also heard preachers tell of their own experiences with "Amen-ing" congregations. It was comical to hear of the inexperienced preacher who would elicit "Amens" from the congregation, only to be thrown off terribly by the brother in the pew who would "Amen" at the most inopportune moment. I also had to confess that I had become a bit uncomfortable in some worship settings where the congregation had allowed their enthusiasm to overshadow the message of the sermon, or the decorum I believed a prayer deserved. But I had not considered the issue to be very crucial; and my professor wanted me and my fellows students to reflect on what he believed to be a meaningful part of the church's worship.

Throughout the history of Israel, "Amen" was an important Hebrew exclamation. It was taken from the verb meaning to take care, to support, to be firm, true and reliable. "Amen" was used especially to affirm an oath or promise. A wife suspected by her husband of infidelity was to consent to a terrible curse if she were indeed guilty. She indicated her willingness to accept God's judgment with her own "Amen" (Num. 5:11-22).

Jeremiah was commanded by Yahweh to remind Israel of her covenant with Him. Jeremiah's "Amen" served to accept God's faithfulness and the subsequent requirement of faithfulness on the part of the people of Israel (Jer. 11:1-5).

Faithfulness to the covenant was so central to Israel's understanding of the nature of Yahweh, Isaiah would call Him the "God of the Amen" (Isa. 65:16).

It may be noted that the Septuagint often translates **amen** using **alethos** (truly) or **genoito** (so may it be). However, it is important to stress that these words imply a sense of hope or desire, where "Amen" is more nearly used as a proclamation of what is true, or of one's commitment to the truth. "Amen" came to be used in the synagogue worship to bind the hearer of the prayers, readings or doxologies to the thoughts contained therein. In saying "Amen," one affirmed that "these thoughts and words are not just true, but I am bound by their authority; and by faith I choose to live with the consequences of these truths." (This information derived from **The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Volume I,** pp. 97-99).

In a significant New Testament passage, it seems apparent that the early church continued this practice in their worship. In 1 Corinthians 14, the Apostle Paul asserted that those who spoke in tongues during a worship service needed an interpreter so that their hearers could say "Amen" and embrace the thoughts spoken as their own. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, being able to respond "Amen" to what was said caused the congregation itself to be edified (vv. 16-17). For Paul, the "Amen" was far from unimportant. The congregation was defined by the words not only spoken in the midst of worship, but embraced actively by each hearer.

I believe the congregational "Amen" can become more meaningful to all of us if it is practiced reflectively. For the church whose members are vocal during prayers and sermons, it may be valuable to assess how much of this is a true reflection of commitment. "Amens" can come too easily. Instead, if each"Amen" indicates the binding of one's own life to a specific truth, they may be heard less often. But they will certainly be heard loudly!

There is also something at stake for those of us who worship in the quieter churches. Let's face it. There are churches all over the brotherhood which will never be in jeopardy of becoming overly vocal. In fact, for them to suddenly begin to "Amen" every good point the preacher makes or loudly punctuate the end of each prayer would seem ludicrously inappropriate. It would simply not be a genuine response for them. However, the "Amen" need not be meaningless to them.

My home congregation does not "Amen" much at all. However, the times I've heard it done among us proved very special. I remember the very few times I have heard someone utter an"Amen" during one of my sermons. I recall how suddenly the sermon that I had written became no longer my sermon. It had become our word from God. I came to hear the "Amen" not as a personal compliment, but as an affirmation that the words I was speaking were ideally words of ministry on behalf of the Body of Christ. I can assure you that I prepared for the next sermon with a new perspective and a new challenge.

Not long ago we installed additional deacons and a new elder, and in that service our pulpit minister asked our new leaders to indicate their willingness to assume the God-given mantle of responsibility by saying "Amen." Then he asked each member of the congregation to commit to their leadership by doing the same.

Those "Amens" were of critical significance, and I have wondered since about ways we might incorporate this biblical practice more often into our worship. Is there value in hearing God's word read to us, followed by our corporate response of submission to that word? If I anticipate truly affirming the words of each prayer with an "Amen" of my own, won't I be more energetic about listening to and absorbing the words of those prayers? Does being given the opportunity and privilege of participating in these corporate affirmations help to underscore my place in the church? Not only do I believe so, but I sense that such a practice would in no way betray who we are as a congregation, or make us less than genuine in our worship. When we come together to worship, we hope to hear a word from God in the reading of Scripture and in the preaching of His Word. We come to speak to God through our prayers. But we also come to speak to one another, encouraging one another as we sing our hymns or enjoy each other's fellowship in the foyer. If we take the "Amen" in our worship seriously, then we will have the opportunity to say something uniquely powerful to the world and to each other. There are truths to which we are fully committed. We have come to know God through His Son, and to Him we are indebted to such an extent that we have a need to proclaim it. To this, let the congregation say "Amen."☐

Don Utley, Cole Mill Road Church of Christ, 1617 Cole Mill Road, Durham NC 27705.

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The 50th Carolina Lectureship

Freedom in Christ: An Exposition of Galatians

April 4–7, 1994

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
9:00 to 9:50		Freedom From Guilt Wayne Altman Summerville, SC	Freedom From Anxiety Bob Bickle Rock Hill, SC	Freedom From Lonliness David Vaughn Gastonia, NC
10:00 to 10:50		Freedom From Human Tradition Jerry Senn Hendersonville, NC	Freedom From Judgment Steven Guy Myrtle Beach, SC	Freedom—Not License Bruce Thweatt Rocky Mount, NC
11:00 to 11:50		Freedom in Christ (I) Tom Bolick Shelby, NC	Freedom in Christ (II) Paul Jarrett Charlotte, NC	Freedom in Christ (III) Ron Newberry Greensboro, NC
12:00 to 1:30	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:30 to 2:20	Paul, To the Churches of Galatia (Gal. 1:1–5) Terry Graves Boone, NC	The Gospel and Hypocrisy (Gal. 2:11–14) David Leach Raleigh, NC	Children, Not Slaves (Gal. 3:21–4:7) Ernie Thigpen Spartanburg, SC	Live by the Spirit #1 (Gal. 5:16–21) Ross Thomson Raleigh, NC
2:30 to 3:20	Another Gospel? (Gal. 1:6–10) Dennis Conner Yadkinville, NC	Justified by Faith (Gal. 2:15–21) Tim Sensing Burlington, NC	Hazards of Telling the Truth (Gal. 4:8–20) Phil Kinzer Charlotte, NC	Live by the Spirit #2 (Gal. 5:22–26) Jim Mullican Clyde, NC
3:30 to 4:20	The Life-Changing Gospel (Gal. 1:11–24) Rob Albright Thomasville, NC	Righteousness by Faith (Gal. 3:1–14) Phil Stapp Winston Salem, NC	Contrasting the Covenants (Gal. 4:21–31) Paul Watson Durham, NC	Fulfilling the Law of Christ (Gal. 6:1–10) Claude Pharr Winston-Salem, NC
4:30 to 5:20	Freedom in Christ (Gal. 2:1–10) Carl Etchison Greenville, NC	The Law and the Promise (Gal. 3:15–20) Floyd Dethrow Winston-Salem, NC	Called to Freedom (Gal. 5:1–5) Jeff Payne Greenville, SC	Boasting in the Cross (Gal. 6:11–18) Stan Helton Florence, SC
5:30 to 7:00	Supper	Supper	Supper	Supper
7:00 to 7:30	Southeastern Children's Home	Agape of NC	Palmetto Bible Camp	Carolina Bible Camp
7:30 to 8:15	Singing	Singing	Singing	Singing
8:15 to 9:00	Freedom in Christ: Free From Sin James Kennedy Greenville, SC	Freedom in Christ: Free to Love C. W. Bradley Memphis, TN	Freedom in Christ: Free to Love C. W. Bradley Memphis, TN	Freedom in Christ: Free to Serve C. W. Bradley Memphis, TN

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Johnny Melton
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Ground Breaking at Friendly

By Ron Newberry

FRIENDLY AVENUE CHURCH OF Christ in Greensboro, North Carolina, celebrated its 25th anniversary in 1993. The congregation has grown from 25 members with eight adults in 1967 to over 400 in 1993, having doubled in size in the past decade.

In addition to this milestone, Friendly Avenue broke ground on December 5 for a new addition which will supply a new worship center/fellowship hall, classrooms and office space. This will complete the third phase of the original building plans.

The unique aspect of our ground breaking ceremony was that it did not include the traditional approach of having the elders and ministers turn the first shovels of dirt. We decided that since this was about the future of the church here and that our children were the future, we would have them break ground accompanied by their Bible class teachers.

Our goal is to have this project completed in ten months and start thinking about the next phase of growth. We praise God for blessing us in such wonderful ways. The church is alive and well in North Carolina.❑

Ron Newberry is the pulpit minister for the Friendly Avenue church. Contact him at 5101 West Friendly Avenue, Greensboro, NC 27410.

Bible School and Evangelism

By Rob Albright

OUR BIBLE CLASS TIME IS IMPORtant to us. We divide up into different age groups to learn and to grow spiritually. The church has used this method for many year.

In evangelism we go out into the world to seek and to save the lost. The church grows numerically. As a result, these new Christians go into Bible Classes to learn and to grow spiritually.

Hopefully, one can see an obvious relationship between conducting Bible classes and teaching the lost. The two go together like a hand and glove.

Matthew 28:18–20 is the key passage to help us to understand this relationship. To "go...and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit" is evangelism. "Teaching them to obey everything" that the Lord has commanded is the educational work of the church.

Ideally, the new Christian, having been baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27), is received into a loving and accepting fellowship of other Christians. The new life in Christ is further explained from the pulpit and in the Bible classroom. The goal is that sooner or later this new Christian will become a mature Christian, capable of teaching others, so that the cycle is perpetuated.

Too often baptism is thought of as the end of the conversion process. No. It is just the beginning. As we begin to grow in knowledge we should also begin to share that knowledge with others.

Spiritual growth is too often equated with the accumulation of biblical knowledge alone. A "walking Bible Dictionary" is usually considered to be spiritually mature, but such may not be the case. One is not spiritually mature whose faith in and love for Jesus have not matured, regardless the amount of Bible knowledge one may possess. Then, too, immaturity is seen in the way some handle their daily problems. They have not learned to use good judgment in areas where right and wrong are not so easily discernable (Heb. 5:14). Lastly, immaturity is evident because they have not reached the point where they can teach others the way of salvation (Heb. 5:12).

Bible School teaching should be designed to communicate the truth of God in a way that each student grows to spiritual adulthood, ready and able to teach others the gospel of Jesus Christ. Then the vital connection between the Bible School and Evangelism will be realized.☐

Contact Rob Albright at RR 4 Box 623, Thomasville, NC 27360.

Contending for a Biblical Understanding of Contending!

By Dennis Conner

IT HAS NEVER BEEN MY INCLINATION, nor my desire, to contend with brethren over the meaning of Scripture. Others may delight in such matters, I do not. Consequently, it is with hesitation, and not a little trepidation, that I respond to brother Jack Simons's article "*What...*'For the Faith'?" in which he took exception to the views expressed in the September 1993 issue of **Carolina Christian** on the book of Jude. Jack and I have know one another for nearly ten years. We are fellow-laborers of the gospel and we share a mutual love—the Warners Chapel church of Christ—where he preaches, and where I was raised. Thus, it is in the spirit of brotherhood that I offer this reply to his objections to the September 1993 issue.

His first objection is to a statement made by Stan Helton on p. 5 that "the letter almost didn't make it into the canon." Brother Simons questions the point of such a statement. Brother Helton made his point quite clear: much attention has always been given to verse three regarding contending for the faith, but outside of that, the book tends to be neglected. (I might ask, when was the last time you heard a sermon on verses 22-23, "Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh"?) The point is that Jude has suffered a long history of being overlooked, as demonstrated in the slowness of the early church to recognize its authenticity and value. Brother Simons raises the question, "Is this an apology for the presence of the book in Holy Writ?" Does he ask this of brother Helton, or of church history? If he is asking the question of brother Helton, then the question could easily be construed as an indictment of his view of Scripture. Let us hope that is not the intent of the question.

When I teach the book of James, I typically mention Martin Luther's estimation of James as a "right strawy epistle." Does this mean that I share Luther's view regarding the canonicity of James? Not in the least. It is quite appropriate, and common, for an introduction to a biblical document to give attention to its canonicity.

Brother Simons's second, and most strenuous, objection is to brother Helton's observation that the Greek word for "contend" (**epagonizomai**) "was a metaphor common to the athletic contests of the Greek games. The compound form of the word (**epi + agonizomai**) does not strengthen the meaning, as 'earnestly contend' in the KJV suggests, but was equivalent to the uncompounded form with the same meaning (Bauckham, p. 31,32). The athletic metaphor, then, should not be pressed to justify aggression or combativeness in any form." In other words, it is not necessary to supply "earnestly" in order to properly translate the word, and the word should not be pressed to mean more than it actually does.

In disagreeing with brother Helton, brother Simons cites **An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words**, by W. E. Vine and **Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon**, both highly respected, but older works. There is this quote from Vine, "The word 'earnestly' is added to convey the intensive force of the preposition" (p. 225). However, more recent Greek scholarship, drawing upon the wider ranges of resources and materials currently available, tends to support brother Helton's assertion. For instance, **The Dictionary of New Testament Theology**, edited by Colin Brown, has "the compounds of agonizomai are used only occasionally, but without any change of meaning"

(Vol. 1, p. 646). The word is translated simply "to fight for." Furthermore, Kittel's **Theological Dictionary of the New Testament** holds that "Even when linked with [a preposition], the verb has the same shades of meaning as the noun, and is sometimes used literally, sometimes figuratively..." (Vol. 1, p. 135). That is, the preposition (**epi**) does not add intensity to the meaning of the word. We can array one Greek scholar against another from now 'til kingdom come, but whether we translate the word "earnestly contend" or simply "contend" will not change the fact that Jude is saying that Christians must take their stand for the faith. If it is objected that the absence of "earnestly" detracts from the intensity of the effort expended in contending, then consider this question: If the proper translation is simply "contend" does Jude expect his readers to give anything less than their fullest effort to the task? Of course not.

Brother Helton continues, "Should this verse be used in an attempt to justify slanderous and libelous name-calling, then Jude's (and God's) intent would be missed." To this brother Simons responds, "The wrong book has been chosen to make such a statement! Notice the terminology in verses 4–16...**'filthy dreamers,' 'clouds...without water,' 'trees whose fruit withereth,' 'twice dead, plucked up by the roots,' 'raging waves of the sea,' 'wandering stars,' 'murmurers'** and **'complainers.'**" Now, does brother Simons mean to suggest that Jude *can* be used to "justify slanderous and libelous name-calling"? I think not. However, his criticism ignores the fact that brother Helton qualified the kind of name-calling he had in mind. Brother Helton has no qualms about the language of Jude in verses 4–16 which graphically describes the ungodly character of the intruders. What he and the other writers disdain is the practice of some who wrest verse three from its context and proceed to use it to justify mean-spirited attacks on others, disregarding the facts and making no attempt to deal fairly and compassionately with those with whom they disagree. That this has happened, and continues to happen, cannot be denied. And, I believe, I know brother Simons well enough to say that he would not support such a use of Jude 3.

At this point, an important question comes to mind. Who are the enemies in Jude? They are ungodly, self-seeking men who have denied the Lordship of Jesus and who pervert the grace of God as they pursue a permissive and immoral lifestyle. They are not honest, God-seeking brothers who have, through sincere and diligent study, arrived at conclusions contrary to the norm. Brother Helton laments "the irony that some would run the risk of promoting the alienation of brothers and sisters by contending in such a way as to draw lines and choose sides...." Brother Simons counters that Jude himself "drew some lines." Notice, however, that whatever lines Jude might have drawn were drawn between those who denied Christ as Lord and those who did not. They were not lines drawn between those who acknowledged the same Lord but who held to different convictions on some other matters. Brother Simons has not read brother Helton carefully. Brother Helton did not discourage drawing lines between the *godly* and the *ungodly*. Again, his reference was to the practice of using Jude to draw lines between *brethren*. It is a misuse of Jude 3 to draw lines between brothers and sisters who confess the same Lord, but who have differing convictions on some matters.

In pressing the point about drawing lines, brother Simons reads something into Jude that isn't there. He writes "but Jude urged those to whom he wrote to mark them [the false teachers, DC] for what they were, contend with them, compassionately restore those they could, and separate themselves from those they couldn't!" Where did Jude give any instructions to mark the false teachers? Yes, Paul told the Romans to note those who cause divisions (Rom. 16:17), but we are talking about Jude, not Paul. Jude is addressing a different situation than Paul. Jude himself has certainly taken note of the false brethren, but, at this point in the situation, we find no instruction to his readers to "mark" them. The only reference to marking is found in verse 4, "For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation..." (NKJV). Who did this marking? Obviously, it was not Jude's readers. And where is the command to separate themselves from the false teachers? It is quite likely that the situation might very well have brought them to that course of action eventually, but not yet. Jude does tell them to be merciful toward the doubters and to attempt to save those they can, as brother Simons notes. This should be the first course of action. Separation may eventually be necessary, but only after all other efforts have been exhausted. And to say that Jude "urged" his readers to separate themselves from the false brethren is to read something into the text that is not there.

As for brother Simons's assertion that Jude urged his readers to contend with the false teachers, if we take the language of Jude as it is, brother Phil Stapp is correct when he writes, "It is important to note that [Jude] does not tell them to fight **against** some individual or group, but to fight **for** the faith" (p. 9). But, protests brother Simons, "How can we contend for the faith and not contend against those who make shipwreck of it?" In reply, I would point out that had Jude's primary concern been to contend, or strive, against someone the correct word to have used would have been **antagonizomai**. However, that is not the word used here. Allow Jude to speak for himself. He says "contend earnestly **for**"—not **against**. The believer contends for the faith, according to Jude, by giving attention to his own spirituality, upholding the faith by the way he lives (vv. 20–23). Now, to be sure, striving for the faith may very well lead to situations in which one must also take a stand against others, but that is a consequence of contending for the faith, not its primary objective.

As I read the articles in the Jude issue, I understood the writers to be saying that it is not a question of whether or not we should contend, rather, it is a question of how we contend. What we have in those articles is an attempt to answer that question in the context of Jude's situation; and Jude wanted his readers to contend without being contentious. As Ross Thomson wrote, "Pugnacious, combative people do little to confirm the message that God is love.... How we fight is just as important as what we fight for" (pp. 14,15). Brother Simons's response is "I agree with this brother that we must 'contend' without being 'contentious,' but it is not being contentious when we expose and refute false doctrine that will divide the church of God and endanger precious souls...." That's right. None of the writers in question ever suggested that we should not oppose false doctrines. Brother Thomson clearly states, "We must, as Christians, oppose all error...." It is just that, he says, "we do not battle the way the world does." Surely, no one would suggest that in our opposition to error we should be pugnacious (i.e., having a belligerent nature: truculent, combative). Yet, this is precisely how brother Simons characterizes Jude's style. He writes, "Just consider how pugnaciously and combatively Jude attacked the false teachers he was endeavoring to expose and refute! **(Read the letter again!)**" Either brother Simons condones a belligerent nature in Christians, or else he misunderstands the definition of pugnacious. By the way, I took his advice and reread the letter—several times, in fact—and Jude appears to be anything but pugnacious and combative. He speaks with firmness, but not belligerence; he is convicted about the truth, but not contentious; and while his language is colorfully descriptive, I would hesitate to call it an attack.

Brother Simons also offers some objections to quotes by some authors used in brother Thomson's article; but, read in their context, the quotes explain themselves. And, should someone question brother Thomson's quotation of Harry Emerson Fosdick and Bertrand Russell, I would suggest that if Jude can quote from the apocryphal book of 1 Enoch (as he did in verse 14), then brother Thomson can quote from Fosdick and Russell.

Perhaps some are concerned that the writers in the Jude issue appear to be suggesting a softened stance toward error. I believe that to be an unwarranted concern. Again, not one of the writers suggested we should not oppose error or refute false doctrine. They did offer conclusions, based on their best understanding of what the text actually says, as to the meaning of "contend for the faith." Was the Jude issue flawless? Nope, it had too many humans involved. Could some of the writers have been more precise in their statements? Undoubtedly. What should not be questioned, however, is their loyalty to Scripture (and I am not suggesting that brother Simons has done this). The September 1993 issue of **Carolina Christian** was produced with the intention of understanding Jude in the context of his own situation and allowing him to define his own terms. One may disagree with some of the conclusions and observations. but it would be a serious mistake to question the motives of the writers in that issue, or their loyalty to the truth. The fact that a brother reaches a different conclusion than I do on a matter does not necessarily mean that he is disloyal to the truth.

I do appreciate brother Simons's willingness to express his concerns in the way he did. May we all remember that we do serve the same Lord and are on the same side as together we build ourselves up in the most holy faith, pray together in the Holy Spirit, and walk together in the love of God.☐

Dennis Conner may be contacted at PO Box 1219, Yadkinville, NC 27055-1219.

Brotherhood News

By Michael R. Mobley

CHARLOTTE, NC...The Archdale church announces its Youth Rally for 1994. The date for the event is February 26–27. The program and staff for this year's rally will be provided by David Lipscomb University and the emphasis will be on Christian Education. For more details contact Paul Jarrett at (704) 554-7733. PROVIDENCE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL announces its first annual Acappella Gospel Music Concert scheduled for Saturday, March 12 at 7:00 P.M. The concert will be held at the Providence Road church meetinghouse. The program will feature the Providence Quartet, Shouting Happy (from the Archdale church), Voices of Praise (from Anniston, AL), with special guests Ohio Valley College Chorus presenting "The Triumph." Tickets for the event are $6.00. To order tickets, contact Providence Christian School, 4900 Providence Road, Charlotte, NC 28226, Telephone: (704) 364-0824. Those making donations to the school of $10, $25, $100, or more will receive a free ticket to the concert and will have their names listed in the program to be distributed the night of the concert. SEATTLE, WA...In 1990 sent a nine-member mission team to Budapest, Hungary and it was the first team from the Churches of Christ to enter the Eastern Bloc after the Iron Curtain fell. They are asking for our prayers for this work that has already harvested fruit for the Kingdom. Any congregation interested in supporting this work financially, or interested in working with the team, or wanting some information about the work should contact the church at: Hungary for Jesus Mission Team, Northwest Church of Christ, Missions, 15555 15th Ave. NE, Seattle, WA 98155-6399. COLUMBIA, SC...Statewide Bible Bowl at St. Andrews Road church, March 5, 9:30–3:30, hosted by the Myrtle Beach church. LONG CREEK, SC...Ladies Day, March 26, with guest speaker Betty Bender. CHARLESTON, SC...Ladies Day, April 23, at the Essex Village church, with guest speaker Doris Black of Austin, TX.☐

Send News Items to Michael R. Mobley, PO Box 312, Mooresville, NC 28115-0312.

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CAROLINA
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To the Elders Among Us

A Study of Church Leadership

"And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed."
— Acts 14:23

Carolina Christian

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All items to be printed in a given month's issue should reach the editor no later than the 20th day of the preceeding month. For example, an item to be included in the July issue must be received by June 20.

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Editorial

By Johnny R. Melton

A NEW MAGAZINE IS GEARING-UP TO serve the churches in the Carolinas. *The Palmetto Messenger* was to begin publishing in March, but the beginning date has been moved back, due to the tremendous amount of work entailed in getting a magazine up and running.

Don Nix has been tapped as the magazine's first Editor. Don serves the By-Pass church in Union, SC as an elder, as well as preacher. (Don and I have many things in common, not the least of which is a love for the By-Pass church. The oldest congregation in South Carolina, my dad, Jesse Melton, preached there 1966–69, and I preached there 1974–77. My wife and I were married while I labored in Union, and we have many dear friends in that good church.)

Among those on the Board of Directors of this new publication are Donald Rhodes, Oscar Craft, Don Nix, Ernie Richards, Jack Simons, and David Powell. Brethren Simons and Powell provide the Tar Heel perspective for the Board.

Brother Simons spoke to me recently regarding the magazine and its purpose. He assured me *The Palmetto Messenger*'s purpose is not to compete with **Carolina Christian**, but to complement it. *The Palmetto Messenger* will not be a subscription-based magazine. Instead, plans are for free distribution to churches, with expenses being underwritten by supporting churches and interested brethren. While *The Palmetto Messenger* will be theme-oriented, it will also address issues confronting our brotherhood.

In my first editorial for **Carolina Christian** I stated the mission of this magazine: to promote the work of the churches in the Carolinas, to communicate information regarding the progress of the churches, and to provide positive biblical instruction. I maintained that while I would not avoid controversial, issue-oriented matters altogether, my intention was to focus on other matters. At that time, I indicated that I did not believe that issue-oriented magazines were wrong, and that I did not view **Carolina Christian** to be in competition with those brotherhood magazines that choose to pursue such an editorial policy. Those continue to be my sentiments.

On behalf of those associated with **Carolina Christian**, I want to wish *The Palmetto Messenger*, its Board of Directors and editor, Godspeed in their efforts to present "the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). I know, all too well, the work and stress involved in publishing a magazine—it is no easy task. I am confident that the two magazines can have a complementary relationship: **Carolina Christian**, communicating the progress of the churches as its primary objective; and *The Palmetto Messenger*, teaching and admonishing as its primary objective.

There should not be competition between lighthouses.

To the Elders Among Us

I AM INDEBTED TO Tim Sensing for his good work in bringing this issue together. It is encouraging to read of the growing number of churches in the Carolinas that are being led by godly elders. While in many ways the Carolinas remain a mission field, we are blessed with many mature, healthy churches.

The material in this issue should be read carefully, and thankfully. Carefully, because the subject matter—Church Leadership—is vital to the future of the church, not only in the Carolinas, but everywhere. Approaching the 21st century, the church confronts crises of enormous magnitude from the world without and from disenchanted brethren within. Solid, biblical leadership is urgently needed. However, this material should also be read thankfully, because all of the writers are Carolina church leaders. Unlike years gone by, we are no longer looking to Tennessee, Alabama, or Texas for models of working churches to emulate. We have churches and church leaders right here in the Carolinas that can serve as role models for the rest of the brotherhood. We should thank God for the progress the church in the Carolinas has enjoyed, and with His help, will continue to enjoy.

Guest Editorial

To the Elders Among Us

By Tim Sensing

I HAVE BEEN PRIVILEGED TO GROW UP in an environment where the important role of the eldership was emphasized. As far as I can remember, my grandfather served as an elder until his death. My father serves now as an elder. Every congregation I attended throughout my youth was led by faithful men. Even when I did mission work, the overseeing eldership in Dallas faithfully supported our work. The Mebane Street congregation is my first situation without elders. Our aim is to appoint elders before the end of this year. It is out of this respect for elders that I agreed to edit this issue of **Carolina Christian**.

"And after they had appointed elders for them in each church, with prayer and fasting they entrusted them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe" (Acts 14:23). It is my firm conviction that we will not have the church Jesus died for unless godly men of blameless character are found to serve as shepherds. The greatest need for our churches today, in my opinion, is for godly men who will personally set an example for the flock, be personally involved in people's lives, and set the pace for the congregation to follow.

This issue of **Carolina Christian** is devoted to teaching some of the biblical concepts on the eldership. It is our desire to encourage men who have taken upon themselves this service. It is our aim to encourage congregations without elderships to consider carefully their need to continue the restoration process in this vital area. It is our hope that congregations will then follow their elders as they submit themselves to the lordship of Christ.

Each of the writers in this issue either has or is presently serving a church as an elder in the Carolinas. Each of them was recommended to me as a man worthy of respect. I want to thank each of them for teaching us more about what God desires. It is time for us to listen to these men who serve their congregations faithfully.

Tim Sensing, PO Box 1861, Mebane Street Church of Christ, Burlington NC 27216-1861.

Should the Preacher Be an Elder?

By Jim Mullican

THE FIRST QUESTION WHICH SHOULD come to mind in considering this matter is whether it is scriptural. Some have pointed to Ephesians 4:11 as an indication that God intended preachers and elders to be different men. There Paul says, "And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers." Of these terms, "evangelists" clearly refers to preachers and "pastors" to elders.

However, some overlap of responsibilities is obviously intended. All four groups—apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors—would have been involved as teachers. In 1 Peter 5:1, the apostle Peter states that he is also an elder. In 2 John 1 and 3 John 1, the apostle John also uses the word "elder" of himself, although it is uncertain whether he means this in reference to his work with a specific congregation or in the sense of "the old man," since he was probably the last living apostle and aged 80–90 years. The most important passage is perhaps 1 Timothy 5:17,18, where Paul says, "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching; for the scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain,' and 'The laborer deserves his wages.'" As the context shows, "double honor" refers to both the respect due all elders and also the financial support due one who preaches the gospel full-time. So, for those concerned about the scriptural authority for a preacher also serving as an elder, the answer is that it has been common ever since the church was established.

Problems

Some may wonder what problems may occur if the preacher serves as an elder. In the several congregations this writer has known where the preacher served in a dual capacity, there were no unusual problems that might not occur in any other congregation.

Someone may fear that "Making the preacher an elder would give him too much power." This statement reflects either the wrong concept of an eldership, a bad attitude toward the preacher, or both. The eldership is not intended as a board of directors but as a group of spiritual men chosen by the congregation as men whom they are willing to trust to lead them safely in the steps of Jesus. No man should ever be appointed unless an overwhelming majority of the church expresses confidence in him. Even if he has one wife, believing children, and all the other characteristics listed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, if there are misgivings about his trustworthiness, he should not be appointed. Any man who sees the work of an elder in terms of power, whether the preacher or anyone else, should not be appointed. The congregation should know the character of its own preacher.

Another concern sometimes expressed is, "If the preacher is an elder, can he ever be fired?" Any preacher, and any elder, should want what's best for the congregation. If the time comes when the congregation would be better served by someone else, such a man should be willing to resign. If he's not that kind of man, he should not be appointed. In any case, those who asked him to come can always ask him to leave. One who would refuse to do so when asked, would have too little likeness of Christ in his life to serve as preacher or elder, anyway. Again, a congregation must appoint only trustworthy men.

A third objection sometimes raised is that "As an elder, he could set his own salary!" This is grasping at straws by someone with ulterior motives. In some congregations where there is a plurality of elders in addition to the preacher, he simply withdraws from the meeting when financial support is to be discussed. If he is one of only two elders, as is sometimes the case, then the subject should be handled by the men of the congregation, led by the other elder.

The only real problem connected with a preacher serving as an elder may be that it places too many additional demands on his time. In a large congregation with an active eldership, this can be a problem. In most smaller congregations, such as most of those in the Carolinas, it will probably not be a concern, as discussed in the next paragraph.

Advantages

One advantage of the preacher serving as an elder is that often he is already doing the work of an elder anyway. When Christians are hospitalized or in need of help, the preacher is often the one who handles it, if for no other reason than that he is the one available every day and the one people know best. He is already helping members to deal with pain, counseling them in how to handle problems, and watching for their spiritual welfare. Ordaining him as an elder will have very little effect on his work, with the exception of attending some additional meetings.

In small congregations, there may not be enough qualified men to appoint an eldership without the preacher. If the preacher is qualified in light of the Scriptures and in the view of the congregation, then it would be wrong to fail to organize the congregation in accord with God's plan as soon as possible, even if it means the preacher and one other man will serve as elders. It is usually best to have as many qualified elders as possible, but having two is infinitely better than having none.

Whether or not the preacher serves as an elder, there should be close communication between the preacher and elders, and when feasible, he should be invited to meet with them. Otherwise, the preacher may be working on one agenda and the elders on another. When the preacher is also an elder, their work will generally be more harmonious and their communication better.

One final advantage of the preacher serving as an elder is that it should encourage longevity in the pulpit. Great churches are not built on moving vans. The churches which grow and have an influence for good do not change preachers every two or three years. When a preacher fears he may be asked to move on, he may accept the next invitation he receives or actively seek an opportunity to relocate. When he feels he is a permanent part of the congregation—at least as permanent as any of us can feel in this world—he is more likely to stay there and devote his full energies to building up that congregation. He will have a closer relationship with both Christians and non-Christians after ten years in one location than after two years, if everything is as it should be.

Conclusion

All things considered, there are few problems and many advantages to the preacher serving as an elder. It could be a great blessing to many Carolina churches which have existed for years without elders.

Jim Mullican has served the Central Haywood church as an evangelist since 1985 and as an elder since 1986. He may be contacted at PO Box 219, Clyde, NC 28721-0219.

Pastors and Teachers

By Bob Rigdon

IN EPHESIANS 4:1 PAUL EXPLAINS, "And He gave some {as} apostles, and some {as} prophets, and some {as} evangelists, and some {as} pastors and teachers." An elder/pastor has to be able to teach as well as to meet other qualifications. Not all teachers can be elder/pastors.

The Greek words (transliterated) describing these men are **presbuteros** from which we have the words "elder" or "presbyter;" **episkopos** from which we have the words "bishop" or "overseer;" and **poimen** from which we have the words "pastor" or "shepherd."

Poimen, (pastor-shepherd) is used 18 times in the New Testament. Jesus is our chief and great pastor-shepherd (Heb. 13:20 and 1 Pet. 2:25).

Kittel's **Theological Dictionary of the New Testament** records the following about pastor-shepherd: "In the Gospels his (the shepherd's) sacrificial loyalty to his calling is depicted with loving sympathy in true-to-life pictures. He knows each of his animals, calls them by name (John 10:3, 14, 27), seeks the lost sheep, is happy when he finds it (Luke 15:4–6), and is prepared to hazard his life to protect his sheep from the wolf (John 10:11–13).... The pastor's task is to care for the congregation (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2–4)...to seek the lost (Matt. 18:12–14)...and to combat heresy (Acts 20:29f). The fulfillment of this task by the pastor is to be an example for the flock, 1 Pet. 5:3" (Vol. VI, pp. 485–502).

The word **poimen** includes the duties of "tending to," feeding, the flock. This refers to breaking the living bread—the Holy Scriptures—to God's people. The primary duty of pastors is to teach the flock—God's sheep—His church (Acts 20:28, 1 Pet. 5:2, etc.).

So pastor-shepherds are to be teachers also. The above verses reveal that pastor-shepherds teach verbally and non-verbally (by example). They should make an in-depth study of all the verses that mention teaching especially in the New Testament. The words of our Chief Shepherd, whether given directly by Him or through Him to the inspired writers, should be the guide for all teaching. There are five Greek words that instruct us about teaching. I will summarize two of them.

Didasko is used as follows: "Jesus taught as one having authority" (Matt. 7:29). Pastors should convey confidence in speaking the words of Jesus without violating the Scriptures that condemn arrogance while commanding gentleness. It is used in Jesus' command to teach all things He commanded (Matt. 28:20). Elders should teach all that Jesus taught. **Didasko** is used when the disciples requested to be taught "how to pray" (Matt. 11:1). Pastors are to teach "in His name" or, as it is better understood today, "by His authority" (Acts 5:28), because the Great Shepherd gave them that authority. This word is used in the command to "teach in wisdom." Combining many definitions of wisdom I would suggest the following definition. Wisdom is "the ability to take all the small principles, put them together appropriately and apply them accurately to each situation which may dictate that something either needs to be said or needs not to be said, and how to do both." Jesus sometimes did not respond! We are to pray for wisdom. We should study Proverbs and James especially to gain wisdom.

Didasko is also used to tell us to teach others who shall be able to teach others (2 Tim. 2:2). Elders must consider this in the light of their demise. This is the word used to stop those from teaching what shouldn't be taught (Titus. 1:11). This is the word used when we are told they "ceased not to teach...." Last of all, this word is used in reminding us that we should teach ourselves while we are teaching others (Rom. 2:21).

Katangello is another Greek word translated to teach or preach. We are to teach: the resurrection (Acts 4:2), the word of God (Acts 13:5), the forgiveness of sins (Acts 13:38), the way of salvation (Acts 16:17), Jesus (Acts 17:3), God (Acts 17:23), the light (Acts 26:23), the Gospel (1 Cor. 9:14), the Lord's death (1 Cor. 11:26), and warning men (Col. 1:28). Elders should take heed to each verse. Members must be reminded of each of the above.

In Titus 1:9–14 elders are described as "holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not {teach}, for the sake of sordid gain. One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.' This testimony is true. For this cause reprove them severely that they may be sound in the faith, not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth."

One of the greatest challenges of being an elder is personally avoiding extremism and then guarding the teaching of others against the extremes of pharisaism and sadduceeism (Matt. 16:1–12). The second temptation that Jesus faced included interpreting one Scripture so as to contradict another Scripture (Matt. 4:6–7). Pastors must not let that happen.

Bob Rigdon, serves the church in Sylva as both pulpit minister and elder. He has preached in Western North Carolina for 41 years, 37 of those have been in Sylva.

Church Leaders–Growing and Changing

By Wm. Jerry Pence

I HAVE BEEN A MEMBER OF THE church all my life. I was baptized when I was twelve years old, and I have grown spiritually from a babe in Christ to a maturing adult. I attribute my growth as a Christian to a grandfather and father who were elders in the church, a mother who provided more love and hot biscuits than anyone deserved, a loving Christian wife and mother of our three children, and a host of family and friends with deep roots in the faith. If anyone was ever blessed with the opportunity to serve Christ, I am surely blessed.

In my rural Kentucky childhood, the church stood for truth as only could be taught in the Church of Christ. I learned early that baptism is necessary for salvation, the Lord's Supper is taken every Sunday, and Little League ball games are not as important as the services of the church. The church believed in gospel meetings that lasted for two weeks, sermons an hour long, and preachers who stayed until the last piece of chicken disappeared. I learned to love the church (the people), and the truth they represented. However, the church was not perfect.

Heated debates would erupt in the summertime over such issues as: one cup for the Lord's Supper, Sunday school classes, fellowship halls, and orphan's homes. The debates would sometimes be with denominational churches in the area; but, more often than not, the debates would be with other Churches of Christ. I often wondered what people in the community thought of the church after seeing two grown men standing and yelling at each other over such trivial issues. I am sure that not one of those debates ever led anyone to Christ. In fact, they probably drove many people to surrounding churches which really were a long way from teaching the gospel. The Church of Christ in many ways has been long on truth, but short on using common sense in leading others to Christ.

Please understand that I am not condemning past leaders of the church; but I want the leaders of the church, today and tomorrow, to learn from church history. Church leaders must realize that we need to open our eyes and hearts to the problems that exist in the Carolinas and throughout the world. We can no longer stand in the pulpits or the street corners crying, "I thank thee, that I am not like other men..." (Luke 18:11). In Romans 2:1, Paul clearly warned the Jews against judging others. The Jews believed that because they had the law, they did not have to be obedient to the law. Paul says in Romans 2 that the Gentiles despised the Jews because of their self-righteousness and their sinful behavior. We should remember that we are debtors to the whole law (Gal. 5:3), which includes knowing the love of Christ, so we might be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph. 5:19).

I believe that church leaders must grow in their ability to understand human behavior. We must learn to listen to sinners without condemning and driving them away before sound teaching can reach their hearts. We must learn to have empathy for others who have pain and suffering in their lives, without reacting as if we are perfect and that the rest of the world must meet our standards. I am not suggesting that we compromise the truth of the Scriptures; but I am suggesting that everyone has not had the same opportunities to know Christ as I have, and as most of today's church leaders have.

I believe there are three spiritual growth principles that church leaders must learn when working with individuals in the church and especially with individuals who need Christ in their lives.

The first spiritual growth principle that church leaders must learn is to *Maintain and Enhance the Self Esteem of Others.* When I search the Scriptures for examples of how Christ dealt with those who did not meet His standards. I am impressed by the kindness and love that He showed towards others. In John 8:1–11, the Pharisees brought a woman to Christ who had been caught committing adultery. The Pharisees reminded Jesus that the law of Moses commanded that the woman be stoned. They asked Jesus what He had to say about this matter. Jesus told them to examine their own hearts; then those without sin should cast the first stone. After the Pharisees turned and walked away, Jesus said, "Where are your accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?" She said, "No man, Lord." Jesus replied, "Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more."Jesus maintained a calm and thoughtful relationship with the woman, while teaching against the sin. He helped the woman save her self-esteem, which enabled her to make the necessary changes in her life. Church leaders need to model the behavior of Christ by maintaining and enhancing self-esteem in others in order that many souls can learn the truth.

The second spiritual growth principle church leaders must learn is to *Listen and Respond to Others With Empathy.* Leaders in the church have typically driven souls away with a dogmatic approach to salvation. We have been guilty of condemning individuals about doctrinal differences and sinful conditions in their lives, without taking time to listen to their concerns and beliefs. As an elder in the Cole Mill Road church in Durham, I have found it is possible for people with different views of the Scriptures to worship together in harmony, while they continue to search for the truth in the Scriptures. It is important that church leaders establish a sound scriptural foundation; but it is also important for the leaders to be willing to listen openly to all members in the congregation. Our role, as was Philip's with the Eunuch in Acts 8:30–31, is to guide others to the understanding of the Scriptures. Philip begins his relationship with the Eunuch by asking him questions, and determining his needs; then Philip explains the Scriptures.

In John 4 we find Jesus talking to the Samaritan woman at the well. He could have treated her with the same disrespect that other Jews had shown to her. Instead He listened, gained her confidence, and then taught her the truth. When Jesus asked for a drink of water, she was surprised that He would even talk with her, much less drink out of a Samaritan's cup. Jesus took the opportunity to teach her about the living water. Not only did Jesus affect the life of the Samaritan woman, but she went and told others about the Christ. Jesus was able to teach many lost souls by listening and responding with empathy to the woman. Each soul that turns to Christ opens a multitude of doors for teaching the gospel.

The third and most difficult spiritual growth principle church leaders must learn is to *Involve Others in Resolving Their Own Problems.* Maintaining and enhancing self-esteem and listening with empathy will increase the opportunities to teach and pastor others. Ordering and dictating change in peoples lives will cause people to blame the church for their failures. Ministers, elders, and other church leaders must understand that a permanent behavioral change is more likely to occur when individuals are involved in resolving their own problems. People who determine that changes are required in their lives are more willing to take responsibility for their own actions. There is an old proverb that says, "Feed a person a fish and he will be hungry again, teach a person to fish and he will feed himself for the rest of his life." In Matthew 28:19, the Scriptures tell us, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Teaching is our objective, not telling and directing.

In Luke 15 we find a young man who wanted his share of the family's wealth. The father reluctantly gave his son what he demanded. Some have said that the father had to change his teaching style and allow the young man to learn for himself. After the young man had wasted his share, he returned home to his father asking for forgiveness. If the father had stopped teaching and had become an over-demanding parent, the son would have left and never returned. The father listened, maintained the self-esteem of the son, and allowed the young man the opportunity to work out his own problems. The father never closed the door on their relationship, and the son was able to return home knowing that his father loved him. This is a great lesson for church leaders and for parents.

Like the young man Luke 15, many others need our help to turn from the sins of the world. As Christian leaders, we must learn to demonstrate the love of Jesus. We must grow spiritually and look for ways to reach the lost souls in our communities and around the world. Many people we come into contact with each day have beliefs and values different from ours. We need to enhance their self-esteem, listen with empathy, and involve them in solving their own problems. Jesus has given us a commission to teach and model Christian behaviors. Church leaders are catalysts in peoples lives. My prayer is that church leaders in the Carolinas will be positive catalysts who lead people to Christ, rather than negative catalysts who drive people away.

Wm. Jerry Pence may be contacted at the Cole Mill Road Church of Christ, 1617 Cole Mill Road, Durham, North Carolina 27705.

Elder Selection Process–A Case Study

By Jack Harris

I HAVE BEEN ON TWO COMMITTEES IN two different congregations whose purpose was to develop a process for the selection of elders. Most recently this work has been done for the North Raleigh Church of Christ— a work begun by Brooks Avenue Church of Christ on June 24, 1990.

Role of Shepherds

The first area addressed was the role of shepherds. The eldership is expected to function in two different roles, that ultimately conflict. First, the eldership functions as a board of directors, financial managers, administrators, initiators, decision-makers, dispute-settlers, complaint department, etc. Secondly, the elders function as shepherds and are involved in counseling, "stray-catching," teaching, equipping, encouraging, agitating "good works," guardians, protectors, visionaries, etc. We agreed at the beginning that our understanding of the Bible indicates the primary role of the elder is shepherding. We wanted to develop a model that would help elders be shepherds first, and, in turn, use that model to identify potential pastors.

Ministry/Gifts

Biblically, the elder is a person who is "gifted" by God to shepherd (Eph. 4:11–12; 1 Cor. 12:27ff). As a result, that person is expected by God to use that gift in ministry (Rom. 12:3–8). It was our recommendation that we search to identify men that God had gifted to be shepherds and to expect shepherds to minister in a pastoral role. Elders, like all members, have differing gifts according to the grace and faith the Spirit has given them, and their individual gifts should be encouraged. Shepherds should not be asked to serve primarily in functions that do not correlate to their gifts and calling as shepherds (Acts 6:1ff). They must feel expected to say "yes" to shepherding opportunities, and empowered to say "no" to responsibilities that are not directly pastoral. The process is to help identify men that God wants to serve as our shepherds.

Relationship to the Congregation

We assumed that every member of the congregation needs to be noticed ("known") by at least one shepherd all the time (John 10:3, 14–15). In so doing, needs are met more efficiently and fewer people "fall through the cracks." Pastors should have the freedom to express their individual gifts with fervor while not being expected to perform with equal competence in areas where they are not as well suited.

It is our recommendation that each shepherd have a group; not as teacher or leader, but as someone who is paying close attention to what the members are praying for, and responding to them. It was our belief that the pastor-to-member ratio should be 1:30–50, if at all possible. We thought it appropriate to have clearly defined ministries for the shepherds and provide a model for oversight that was not hierarchical in design (Mark 10:41–45). We wanted to maintain an administrative body (or bodies) that diminishes the administrative responsibilities of the shepherds so they would be devoted to individual needs, prayer, and teaching. In addition, we wanted to provide a healthy environment for pastors to periodically rest from their "official" responsibilities.

Shepherds have a unique role of teaching, leadership, and oversight within the congregation. Elders must maintain a proper perspective on the relationship between shepherding the people and their oversight of other ministries within the congregation.

Terms

Another recommendation from the committee concerns the idea of having term limits of four years, with a mandatory one-year sabbatical. This proposal has several advantages, such as: to provide rest from the demands of being an elder, to allow for the graceful exit of a pastor, to ensure that "new blood" enters the eldership regularly, to encourage accountability, etc. The plan calls for the pastors to draw lots to determine the order of the sabbaticals. A different pastor goes "off" each year in rotation. An annual ritual of affirmation, appreciation, welcoming new pastors, and saying "thank you" to pastors taking leave involves the congregation in the process. Re-entry to official duties will require some kind of affirmation from the congregation.

Identification of Candidates

We began the elder selection process with a series of lessons on the eldership. I am not going into the qualifications as that is not the intent of this article. Because the individuals with the ability to lead are gifted by God, our role as a congregation is not merely to "select" but to "identify" the pastors God has provided for us. As a result, the congregation was approached with a series of questions that ask in different ways "Who pastors you?" The following are questions which were mailed to our members along with instructions for responding. (I am not including the instructions to conserve space.)

(1) To whom do you look to build your faith, provide biblical insight, or offer sound spiritual guidance?
(2) Who challenges, teaches, or encourages you to progress in "love and good works?"
(3) If you were in trouble or deeply worried about something, who would you trust to share your feelings/concerns with?
(4) Who would you invite to help resolve a conflict in which you were involved (who do you see as peacemakers)?
(5) Name 3–5 people you would want to have praying for you.
(6) Who do you see as:
    (a) team leader? (b) visionary?
(7) Of all the people you've identified on this survey, who would you willingly follow if they were leading?
(8) Which of the qualified men of the congregation would you want to serve as shepherds?

Once we tabulated the survey it was evident who were already functioning as shepherds. These men were presented to the congregation for consideration. The men identified and their wives have been attending a series of classes regarding the responsibilities of elders. It has given each one an opportunity to express himself on a number of topics that elders face. This has been extremely beneficial to all in thinking about the tremendous responsibilities faced as elders and in getting to know one another better. As this is written, if it is God's will, elders will be appointed on January 23, 1994 at the North Raleigh Church of Christ. *Jack Harris and six other men were appointed elders on January 23. May the Lord bless them and the flock God has entrusted to them.*

An Inside Glimpse

By Tim Sensing

THE FOLLOWING IS AN INTERVIEW with the eldership of the Northview church in Statesville, NC (Gerald Boan, Lowery Lanier, and Jim Smith) conducted on January 11, 1994. Walter Edwards is the pulpit minister and Tim Pinkston is the associate minister. The congregation is twenty-one years old and each man has served the church as an elder for eleven years. This was the first eldership for the Northview congregation. Northview has a membership of 178. I selected this eldership for two reasons: (1) Although their size ranks them among the largest in the Carolinas, they closely resemble the typical church. (2) They are a congregation that is young, who still remember the time they existed without an eldership, and are growing. For those congregations without elders, the Northview congregation can serve as a model of a congregation that successfully selected spiritual leaders who have guided them to become what God intends. The Lord has blessed them.

Carolina Christian: ***In your own words how do you summarize the qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, and 1 Peter 5?***

Jim: We believe the qualifications given in these texts are very literal. We believe for the elders to be in that position they must meet those standards outlined. 1 Peter 5 mentions that the leaders not lord it over the flock. We are not dictators. We let members make decisions concerning themselves as long as they don't violate the Scriptures. ...(Y)et we all realize that it doesn't mean that perfection is required.

Gerald: We all believe these men should be God-fearing and God-obeying men. They need proper family credentials. They need to be spiritually-minded, kind, compassionate, and godly men. They need to be concerned about the families for whom they have responsibility.

Carolina Christian: ***Acts 20 refers to all three words descriptive of your role, namely, elder, overseer/bishop, and pastor/shepherd. How do you understand your role in relationship to these terms? How do you view the authority of the eldership?***

Gerald: An elder is one who is not only older in years but older in the faith; a mature man who has been a student of the Word for a number of years. He is knowledgeable about God's Word and can use that knowledge in an open and effective manner. In terms of overseer/bishop we feel the responsibility [to see that] every aspect of the work here...is...scriptural.... In regard to pastor/shepherd we feel it is our responsibility to lead and help others walk in the proper way. This is done, not only in what we say, but by our examples. Our authority is from God and only given to us by this congregation.

Lowery: "Shepherd" is a term that describes our function as one who watches over people. We feel like being shepherds is a good way of describing what we do.

Carolina Christian: ***So many of the congregations in the Carolinas do not have elderships. What advice do you have for the churches as they grow toward this restoration of church organization?***

Lowery: So many churches ignore the fact that the eldership is a requirement for the church. Often these churches don't talk about it.

Gerald: These men need to prepare themselves for that role. I would want to encourage them to go through the process of selecting elders as soon as possible. A congregation, in my opinion, will not grow without leaders to make decisions and focus the direction of the congregation toward the future.

Jim: The biggest obstacle for many churches is the congregation not asking for an eldership because two or three men rule the roost. The congregation must desire to have an eldership strong enough to overcome the two or three men who stand in the way of an eldership.

Gerald: These men [referred to by Jim] are usually not qualified either by Scripture or by temperament, and so they resist the congregation's getting an eldership.

Carolina Christian: ***I have heard all my life that being an elder is a thankless job. I think many who have not become elders at various places are afraid of the stress involved. What are some of the joys and positive benefits about being an elder?***

Gerald: I don't agree. You may have heard that all your life, but we have many people here who thank us and appreciate us. It is not thankless as far as we are concerned. I recognize by the nature of the work and the level of stress that comes our way that elders feel like they are not appreciated as much as they would like to be, but there is nothing that I can think of that is more pleasing than to have people who are willing to follow our lead. The joys always far out weigh the costs.

Lowery: Stress is an individual thing. It is so much easier when there is more than one of us to handle situations. The involvement of the other elders helps more than anything else.

Jim: There is nothing that pleases us more than the joy of watching the spiritual growth in the congregation. To see a man, who at one time had trouble leading a closing prayer, stand up and pray eloquently is a great joy. It is a great joy to watch such a one grow in the Lord.

Carolina Christian: ***What role do deacons have at Northview? How do they interact or work with the eldership?***

Jim: This is where we shine as elders. We have turned the deacons loose to do their jobs. We do not micro-manage them, but give them a lot of leeway. We give each of them a job to do and we expect them to follow through. They work very hard to accomplish those jobs. We are doing a great service to the congregation by releasing the deacons to do their jobs.

Carolina Christian: ***What role does your wife have in your work as an elder? I understand the stress on an elder's wife is also heavy, how can the congregation best minister to her? What can an elder legitimately share with his wife and what must be kept in confidence?***

Lowery: Every Tuesday night after I come home my wife asks, "What did you discuss tonight?" Then she adds, "that you can share with me." There are some things that I do share and without her the possibility of being an elder wouldn't be there. She is very important in my life. She eases the responsibility by her understanding.

Gerald: Our wives are vitally important to all of us in our work. They see the good and the negative. They are our sounding-boards on some things and our confidants on some things. They are our support on everything. The congregation can best minister to them by accepting them and not expecting more from them than they expect of themselves. You cannot expect them to be everything and do everything as though they are on a higher plane than everybody else. They need support and comfort, too.

Carolina Christian: ***I have heard about some good works this congregation is involved in. Your eldership was recommended to me to interview. You must be doing something right. What are some of your accomplishments at Northview as elders?***

Jim: This has been a congregation involved in some kind of building program for many years, which indicates that we are growing. We have initiated programs that the congregation works at and supports. This congregation supports us well. *We* do not accomplish anything; *their* work and support is what helps us to accomplish the spiritual mission set before us.

Gerald: Just as Jim mentioned before about the responsibility we give our deacons to do their job, and us holding them accountable to do their job, has brought even greater support than prior to that time. They appreciate that kind of leadership. And the man in the pulpit and our associate minister have always been supportive of us and a positive influence.

Lowery: And it is not only the deacons, but once a year we provide an opportunity for the people to sign up for what they want to be involved in. They work with our deacons to accomplish the work.

Jim: It is the congregation that accomplishes.

Carolina Christian: ***Whenever you get a group of individuals together you are bound at times to disagree and have conflict. 1 Thessalonians 5:13 is just one passage that brings peace and working together as leaders together. What are some of the secrets for a harmonious working relationship? How do you arrive at a decision?***

Jim: We do disagree on judgment calls. We approach a problem by discussing all sides of that issue. We approach decisions by asking about how it is going to be instituted, what is going to happen as it goes, and what is going to happen at the end of it. The preachers are included, too. They attend every meeting that we have. When we get to the end of it, we do agree on how we are going to handle it. I may not get my way, sometimes; but, at the end of the discussion, after I have had my say, I accept the decision and go on.

Gerald: We meet every Tuesday. One area that I'm proud of is that we leave every Tuesday in agreement. No hard feelings toward each other leave this room. And we voice no dissension outside this room to others. Not every decision we make is going to be the right decision. We recognize that fact. We use the best information we have available. We understand that we cannot see perfectly everything that is ahead. The congregation always sees a united eldership. We do not disagree in public. I think the key word for this group is respect. We love each other, and we respect each other. We respect each other's opinions on matters of liberty.

Carolina Christian: ***Realistically, being an elder is tough. What are some of the struggles of being an elder? What resources do you depend upon to get you through the struggles?***

Gerald: The pressure that people sometimes put on you by believing you have a perfect answer to every problem is the greatest burden that I feel. I depend upon these two men. We pray together and encourage each other. When I have a struggle, these are my elders. I am also a sheep. I depend upon these men for guidance, strength, and help. Our relationship with each other is a real strong point for me.

Jim: When you deal with people there is pressure and struggle. We try to be people-oriented. And when you are people-oriented you are going to have struggles. Our desire is to help other people. And the support we have as elders comes primarily from our wives, the preacher, and from one another. This congregation is a loving congregation that shows us real support. We know more about each other than anyone else. Strength does come from each other.

Carolina Christian: ***In what ways do you communicate to the congregation and what opportunities do you provide for input (feedback) from the congregation?***

Gerald: We communicate orally with the congregation. We ask for their input. We use questionnaires for evaluation of us, deacons, education program, and the pulpit preaching. We have a suggestion box. We use questionnaires to ask the congregation if they prefer this or that, and we will allow the congregation to make determinations about many items. We try to be very open. We encourage every one to talk to us or the deacons or the ministry leaders about anything that is on their minds. We have an open door policy. We also spend time before the congregation. We communicate openly with them about issues that need to be discussed. Spending time in the pulpit talking with the people is the primary way we communicate to them. I think the congregation really appreciates that, too. We will spend four or five hours together eating and discussing concerns of the congregation every Tuesday. Anyone in the congregation that wants to talk with us knows they can call at that time. (Note: two calls came during our interview.)

Jim: In those areas that affect every one in matters of judgment, our judgment might not be the best, so we involve everyone in arriving at those decisions. Some examples relate to times of Wednesday night services, or the worship format. We tried something different in the worship format for a month and then asked the congregation if they wanted to continue it.

Carolina Christian: ***How do you relate to the preacher?***

Jim: The preachers are here, let them answer that.

Walter: Their openness toward us, their willingness to let us attend their meetings, their willingness to share with us their concerns, is commendable. We meet together weekly and have a good relationship. We break bread together. We know one another.

Tim: The word mentioned earlier is the key: Respect. That respect grows as I get to know them because of their ability. We are much more effective because they are open with us and communicate to us what they expect. They are supportive and available. Since I've been here I have grown because of these effective elders.

Gerald: They are involved in our meetings because we not only want them to know what a decision is but how that decision came into being. They can support that decision because they know where that decision is coming from, the process we use. They then can support us.

Carolina Christian: ***1 Timothy 6:17 says that elders who serve well should be considered worthy of double honor. 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13 also teaches that we esteem highly those who are in leadership. In what...ways could a congregation...show their respect and appreciation [and] bestow honor upon their elders?***

Lowery: Prayer is the best way for a congregation to support us.

Gerald: The greatest sign of respect for a congregation to show an eldership is to follow their leadership. Here, we don't have members who argue against decisions, but who pray for us.

Jim: The congregation here has given a dinner, sent notes, given us hugs and expressed appreciation often: we are blessed in this way.

Concluding our session, **Walter** added these comments: I think our elders are successful because they have the ability to recognize and to utilize people's talents. They are not afraid to delegate with the accompanying accountability. Personally, they are involved in the Lord's work. These men are willing to go out and teach Bible Studies in the home. They teach in classroom situations. They visit. They don't just tell others to do something, they are willing to do it themselves, as examples. Each one cannot be involved in every facet obviously, but they are personally involved.

They are also successful because they are self-confident men. They are self-confident in their Christian work, in their vocations, in their marriages, in their personal commitment to Christ, and their personal relationship with Christ. I think that the freedom the people here have to approach these men is very important. They each respect the spirituality and growth of the other. This mutual respect is vital for the success of this eldership.

Carolina Christian: ***Let me thank again the eldership at Northview for sharing their insights about eldership. We had an enjoyable meal and discussion. We had not met before the night of this interview, but they opened themselves up to my scrutiny. May the Lord bless these men and all our godly leaders in the church.***

To the Elders

By Wayne Altman

THE APOSTLE PETER'S FIRST LETTER must have refreshed and strengthened the elders who first read it. "I appeal as a fellow elder," says Peter (5:1). Did he serve a local church? Or did he simply share the functions of an elder? Whatever the answer may be, we know Peter proudly accepted the title. In so doing, he gave great significance to the elder's work. They were sharing with the apostles in the work of leading God's people. Those in the world may not hold them in high regard, but Peter saw their work as part of his own.

But if their work is to be highly regarded, it also calls for a price to be paid. Peter speaks of Christ's sufferings (5:1). Just as Christ suffered (3:18), so Peter and others who point the way to Christ will suffer (4:13). The apostle Paul tells the Ephesian elders of his own suffering for the church (Acts 20:31) and urges them to follow his example. For those who suffer for Christ, however, there will be glory (Rom. 8:17).

Job Description

Peter gives the only description of an elder's work. He simply says, "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers" (5:2a). The primary model in the New Testament for the role of elder is the shepherd model. The elder must be to God's people what an ancient shepherd was to his sheep. He knows them and they know him. They hear his voice and they follow. He feeds and protects them. His authority lies much more in his character, credibility and competence than in his "official position" as shepherd. His people will follow him because they love him and they love him because he serves them (cf. John 10:1–22; Luke 22:25–27).

The elder's most fundamental task is to know and understand the Christian faith and to recognize the threat of false teachers, some of whom will rise up from among the elders themselves (Acts 20:28–31). The elder is primarily a teacher who can guide the church through times of danger. He must be a man of faith, knowledge, and wisdom, equipped to lead and able "to prepare God's people for works of service" (Eph. 4:11–12). While elders are free to use preachers and other professionals to help them feed and protect the flock, increasing reliance on such has been followed by less respect for the role of elder, which, in turn, has probably led to fewer young men being willing to prepare themselves to be shepherds.

Dangers Facing Elders

The greater the task, the greater the temptations. Elders are given authority and respect by the church and these are subject to abuses. Peter mentions three.

First, he says elders are to serve "not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be" (5:2). Leading God's people means inconveniences, burdens, sleepless nights. It often means little appreciation and much criticism. Yet, it is important that elders serve "joyfully, and not sadly" (Heb. 13:17). So, elders must be willing and not try to serve because no one else will.

A young man once told me that he married his wife because no one else was interested in her. He thought he was doing a noble thing! The marriage did not work well. Neither will a marriage work between the church and an unwilling elder. God gives a gift to each one (4:10). To some he gives the gift of leadership, and they are expected to develop and use that gift to serve the church.

The second temptation facing the elder concerns money. "Not greedy for money, but eager to serve" (5:2). His eagerness does not mean that he wants to "run for the office of elder" the way men run for political office. He is "eager to serve" in that he loves the Lord and his people and has a sincere desire to use his gift of leadership. He believes such service is of infinite and lasting significance. He trembles at the magnitude of the task, just as Moses (Exod. 3:11), Jeremiah (Jer. 1:6) and others have, but he feels an inner compulsion to let God use him.

"The worker deserves his wages" (Luke 10:7). It was expected that students would pay their teachers (Gal. 6:6). Elders were responsible for supervising rather large sums of money and some of them were paid for their work (1 Tim. 5:17). When money is involved, some men will be attracted for the wrong reason. Therefore, those entrusted with money must maintain high standards of accountability at all times. They must remember that the money belongs to God.

I recently heard of a preacher who was caught stealing thousands of dollars from the church. The elders learned that he had stolen from the previous church he had served; but, when his stealing was discovered, his elders fired him and left him free to prey on the next church.

James Thompson, in his book, **The Church in Exile**, makes an interesting comment: "Wherever men are paid for their services as laborers worthy of their hire, they must resist the temptation to work 'for shameful gain.' The corporate models, in which one's pay is commensurate to his value in the marketplace, has no place in the church. Nor is the athletic model, by which the athlete is paid according to the numbers he can bring in to the arena, appropriate to the church. Leaders who adopt the wrong models in the handling of money lose all credibility in the church, for the church's model was provided by the one who paid the price of serving" (p. 118).

The third temptation is the will to rule or lord it over the church. "Not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to

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the flock" (5:3), says Peter. To lord it over God's people means to be arbitrary, arrogant, selfish, or excessively restrictive. It is to seek to boss rather than to bless. Prestige and power are more important to some than money. Power and authority are enormously attractive even in a narrow sphere. "Some would rather be a big fish in a little pond than a little fish in a big pond." John Milton's Satan thought it better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven. Shakespeare spoke about "man, proud man, dressed in a little brief authority, playing such fantastic tricks before high heaven as would make angels weep."

Jesus brought a special kind of leadership-by-example. When the disciples argued over who would be the greatest he said, "whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.... For even the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:35–45). So the elder must lead by example. Does he want his followers to be pure in speech and conduct? To be servants? To be generous in giving money to the church? To win souls? To love God's work? To be people of prayer? Then he must exemplify these qualities in his own life.

The Reward

Elders have to pay a price to serve and may suffer now, but they share that with the apostle Peter and Jesus Christ. When Jesus, the Chief Shepherd appears, he will give faithful elders a "crown of glory that will never fade away" (5:4).

Wayne Altman, Summerville Church of Christ, 413 Old Trolley Road, Summerville, SC 29485.

More Than A Checklist!

By Larry Eppley

"AND NOW BROTHERS AND SISters it's time to select additional elders. On your way out today please pick up the checklist which is based on 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, and prayerfully consider those men who might qualify to become new elders for this church."

Sound familiar? While not a frequent announcement, such is common to churches of Christ when there is a need for additional leadership.

Although valuable for selecting elders, the Timothy and Titus passages are much more than a checklist. In fact, they provide a window to the Christianity of the first century.

The immediate contexts of the "elder qualifications" in the letters to Timothy and Titus tell us about the need for elders in the first-century church. The elder (overseer) was to provide continuity for a family of believers, whose backgrounds were diverse, but whose common bond was faith in Jesus as the resurrected Christ.

Elders were not appointed to perpetuate human traditions, but to guarantee each member the freedom to grow up in their Lord. "The goal of our instruction," Timothy was told, "is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Tim. 1:5).

Apparently, there were those who were trying to turn the church into some kind of religious "in-crowd," with a desire to exclude others on the basis of some finely tuned program. Paul, in his first letter to Timothy, exalts Jesus as God's Son, emphasizes God's grace, and forbids religious tedium. Christianity was not about rule-keeping and self-exaltation. It was not about special, inside-knowledge. It was not about binding people up, but was about turning them loose in the Lord.

Paul, raised to live according to the traditions of the fathers and trained as a Pharisee among Pharisees, knew all too well what happens when religion degenerates into mere law-keeping. Such had crucified Jesus. It would certainly destroy the church as God would have it.

The greatest threat to Christianity in Ephesus was not external. Rather, Paul feared that the Ephesian Christians would not receive healthy teaching. (In some translations, healthy teaching is called "sound doctrine." This oft-used phrase refers not only to what is believed, but also to a proper balance of emphasis.)

This concern was behind Paul's warnings

to the Ephesian elders several years earlier (cf. Acts 20:17–35). Paul knew that unless the elders could demonstrate a balanced Christianity, the church was doomed to legalism, elitism, and egotistic leadership.

Whatever Paul had in mind when he described the first-century elder, it certainly was not to provide a mere checklist for elder selection. Instead, Paul was setting the proper tone for first-century leadership, and therefore, identifying spiritual maturity.

Paul's description of the elder/overseer is a guarantee that Christianity can be lived. Paul's instructions to Timothy and Titus do not suggest that these men would find no one who could serve as elders. To the contrary, Titus in Crete is told to "appoint elders in every city" (Titus 1:5). Timothy in Ephesus was simply told what elders must be, since elders had already been appointed prior to Paul's writing. (In fact, Paul met with an eldership from Ephesus prior to his arrest in Jerusalem.) In either case, Paul expected every church to have suitable men for leadership.

Some churches have existed for generations with no elders, never willing to accept any available prospects. Others, determined to be "scripturally organized," have chosen elders prematurely. In both cases, the "checklist" mentality has prevailed. In neither case has the intent of Paul's instructions been carried out. The only workable alternative is to emphasize the qualities of the Christ-life, and to realize that they are not produced by an elder-selection process.

Spiritual maturity is not measurable quantitatively. The "qualifications" of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are actually qualities. They relate to the general demeanor of one's character. Although no Christian is absolutely selfless and sinless, Timothy and Titus could take Paul's description and seek out the kind of man who could serve effectively in this leadership role. In fact, the "qualifications" given to Timothy and Titus are not verbatim copies of the same list. Furthermore, neither had the other's list as they set out to follow Paul's instructions. When taken as "qualities" however, the two lists are totally compatible.

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The essence of first-century Christianity is not to be found so much in the details, as it is in the direction. For example, the church which would wrangle about how many children an elder should have misses the point altogether. Paul, like his Lord, would place more emphasis upon the quality of the family life of the potential elder.

Perhaps the key concept of spiritual maturity is identified by the expression "above reproach." When writing to Titus, Paul made it clear that this was not one among many items on his list. One might say that this was his list.

He must be above reproach in morality (Titus 1:6). He must be above reproach in temperament (Titus 1:7). Timothy's instructions follow the same structure.

Christian maturity means character. It involves faithfulness to one's spouse and family. It is the embracing of what is right and moral. It is the ability to share with others, in hospitality and evangelism. (In fact, when viewed in context, the phrase "able to teach" has more to do with ethical living than speaking ability.)

Presented negatively, "above reproach" means not ruled by anger, strong drink, or money. In this way, Titus was told, the elder is "above reproach as God's steward" (Titus 1:7).

Throughout Paul's letters to Titus and Timothy, the Christ-life is a life of dignity. This principle relates to the way a man manages his family (1 Tim. 3:4). But deacons are also to be men of dignity (1 Tim. 3:8). So also are women who are assigned special responsibilities (1 Tim. 3:11). Apparently, dignity is the significance of the expression "likewise" which provides the grammatical transition between Paul's remarks concerning elders, deacons, and the women mentioned in 1 Timothy 3.

The grand theme of Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus is not elder- selection. It is Christlikeness. If we, as God's people, are failing, it is not because we don't have the right kind of elders. It's because we are not producing healthy Christians.

Jesus did not die to make elders. He died to make men free to live the Christ-life. As would be expected, elders were, and are, to demonstrate that life to others.

Larry Eppley, formerly a preacher in North Carolina (Rockingham and Gastonia), is now an elder at the church of Christ on Providence Road in Charlotte.

For Further Study

By Tim Sensing

ALEXANDER STRAUCH HAS WRITTEN A comprehensive text on the eldership entitled **Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call To Restore Biblical Church Leadership**,published by Lewis & Roth, Littleton, Colorado, in 1986. Strauch does not assume any previous background on the part of the reader because he is writing primarily to denominations that do not follow the biblical mandate for elders in every church. Strauch's purpose is to restore the doctrine and practice of elderships among the denominations. Although he does not show any knowledge of our fellowship or of our practice, his volume would be representative of our teaching on this matter.

Chapter One summarizes and defends biblical elderships. He often proves what is obvious to most of us. Yet, due to the nature of his audience, this defense is necessary. Chapter Two is entitled, "Humble Servants" and is the key to understanding the Christian community and its leadership style and structure. Strauch's emphasis here is on the teachings of Jesus. Chapter Three surveys the Old Testament texts on elders. Chapters 4–19 are expositions of nineteen different passages (Acts 11:30; 15:1–22; 21:17–26; 14:23; 20:17–38; James 5:13–15; 1 Thess. 5:12–13; Phil. 1:1; 1 Pet. 5:1–5; Heb. 13:17; Titus 1:5–9; 1 Tim. 2:9–15; 3:1–13; 4:14; and 5:17–25). These chapters are exhaustive in their treatment of the subject. His biblical study is sound and his interpretive comments are conservative. He has a high view of inspiration. Finally, Strauch concludes in Chapter Twenty-one by outlining general ideas and offering practical advice. A study guide is available.

He states six purposes for this study: (1) To accurately explain what biblical eldership is. (2) To restore the rightful place that this doctrine deserves in both teaching and practice. (3) To challenge false traditions that have developed beginning with Ignatius. (4) To revitalize present elderships. (5) To raise up new elders. (6) To teach members about their obligations to elders.

He notes the following six distinguishing features of a biblical eldership: (1) A biblical eldership will consist of men who are humble servants. They will be sacrificial and loving. They will care for God's family. The spiritual character of the men is as important as the restoration of the doctrine. (2) Biblical elderships share their oversight with Christ. The plurality of the eldership is vital due to the different talents each man will bring to the role. (3) There is a non-clerical structure to biblical elderships. (4) The scriptural qualifications are objective, moral, and spiritual. (5) Biblical elderships are male. And (6) biblical elderships also must have congregational submission. Elders oversee, lead, and shepherd as stewards of God. The local congregation follows that leadership.

Strauch's forceful call for a change of practice is a welcomed addition to the literature on eldership. This is one of the most comprehensive books on the subject that I have seen. Although I do not agree with every conclusion he arrives at, all of his conclusions have been advocated widely by some in our fellowship. I recommend this volume highly.

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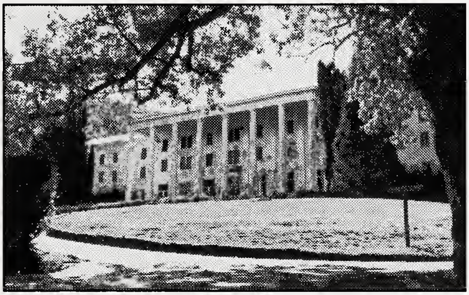

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Freedom in Christ: An Exposition of Galatians

April 4–7, 1994

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
9:00 to 9:50		Freedom From Guilt Wayne Altman Summerville, SC	Freedom From Anxiety Bob Bickle Rock Hill, SC	Freedom From Lonliness David Vaughn Gastonia, NC
10:00 to 10:50		Freedom From Human Tradition Jerry Senn Hendersonville, NC	Freedom From Judgment Steven Guy Myrtle Beach, SC	Freedom—Not License Bruce Thweatt Rocky Mount, NC
11:00 to 11:50		Freedom in Christ (I) Tom Bolick Shelby, NC	Freedom in Christ (II) Paul Jarrett Charlotte, NC	Freedom in Christ (III) Ron Newberry Greensboro, NC
12:00 to 1:30	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:30 to 2:20	Paul, To the Churches of Galatia (Gal. 1:1–5) Terry Graves Boone, NC	The Gospel and Hypocrisy (Gal. 2:11–14) David Leach Raleigh, NC	Children, Not Slaves (Gal. 3:21–4:7) Ernie Thigpen Spartanburg, SC	Live by the Spirit #1 (Gal. 5:16–21) Ross Thomson Raleigh, NC
2:30 to 3:20	Another Gospel? (Gal. 1:6–10) Dennis Conner Yadkinville, NC	Justified by Faith (Gal. 2:15–21) Tim Sensing Burlington, NC	Hazards of Telling the Truth (Gal. 4:8–20) Phil Kinzer Charlotte, NC	Live by the Spirit #2 (Gal. 5:22–26) Jim Mullican Clyde, NC
3:30 to 4:20	The Life-Changing Gospel (Gal. 1:11–24) Rob Albright Thomasville, NC	Righteousness by Faith (Gal. 3:1–14) Phil Stapp Winston Salem, NC	Contrasting the Covenants (Gal. 4:21–31) Paul Watson Durham, NC	Fulfilling the Law of Christ (Gal. 6:1–10) Claude Pharr Winston-Salem, NC
4:30 to 5:20	Freedom in Christ (Gal. 2:1–10) Carl Etchison Greenville, NC	The Law and the Promise (Gal. 3:15–20) Floyd Dethrow Winston-Salem, NC	Called to Freedom (Gal. 5:1–5) Jeff Payne Greenville, SC	Boasting in the Cross (Gal. 6:11–18) Stan Helton Florence, SC
5:30 to 7:00	Supper	Supper	Supper	Supper
7:00 to 7:30	Southeastern Children's Home	Agape of NC	Palmetto Bible Camp	Carolina Bible Camp
7:30 to 8:15	Singing	Singing	Singing	Singing
8:15 to 9:00	Freedom in Christ: Free From Sin James Kennedy Greenville, SC	Freedom in Christ: Free to Love C. W. Bradley Memphis, TN	Freedom in Christ: Free to Love C. W. Bradley Memphis, TN	Freedom in Christ: Free to Serve C. W. Bradley Memphis, TN

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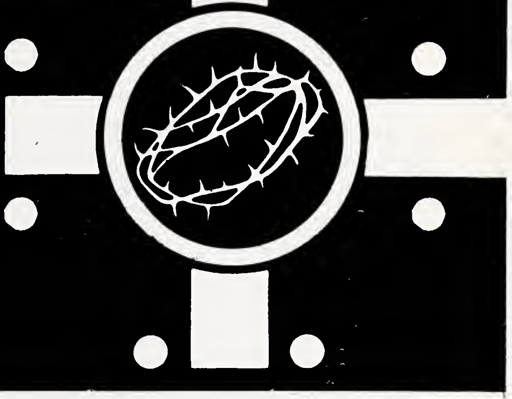

Freedom In Christ

Studies in Galatians

Carolina Christian

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Editorial

By Johnny R. Melton

THE ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE OF **Carolina Christian** constitute an overview of the message of Galatians. Paul's impassioned letter to the churches he had founded early in his ministry has a message that is particularly relevant to the church today. Just as Paul took on the legalists (those who sought salvation in law-keeping) of his day, faithful Christians resist modern-day legalists.

From time to time in the history of the church there has arisen a set of circumstances that warrants a special study of this epistle and its clarion cry for freedom. Luther, confronted with the repressive developments of Catholicism, fueled his reform movement with his lectures on Galatians. Jerry Jones, in our own day, having thrown off the shackles of the Boston movement, has written an expositional commentary on Galatians, **From Slavery to Sonship**. Jones observes, "The book of Galatians stands as a bulwark against self-help salvation and man-made religion." He is concerned with "two great dangers facing the church in every generation...legalism on the one hand and a license (thinking you can do what you want) on the other hand."

Freedom in Christ is the antidote for legalism. Sometimes those two terms are miscomprehended. Freedom is misunderstood to mean the absence of all restraints and the presence of no obligations, while legalism is thought to mean simply keeping commands and rules. Of course, with those definitions, it is little wonder that those who call for freedom today are viewed with suspicion by Bible-believing people. Further, if legalism is, in fact, simply showing respect for God's laws, then who can oppose it?

The problem lies in the definitions. Freedom is not absolute. Christians are free *in Christ.* Christians are freeborn sons of God, but they have the responsibilities that are inherent in sonship. Legalism is not simply keeping rules, nor is it obeying commands. Legalism is the belief that salvation can be obtained by keeping rules or obeying commands. Legalism is not inherent with Judaism. Not all Jews who kept the law were legalists. Jesus did; and He wasn't. Legalism is the effort to save oneself based on one's ability to keep law, not just *the* Law of Moses, but *any* law.

It is a bit ironic, but those of us who recognize that salvation is not rooted in grace without faith, and that biblical faith is always active, can easily fall victim to a subtle legalism. It is easy to turn our faith response to God's grace into a formula that we have deduced from Scripture, and to think that the precision with which we follow the formula is the basis for our salvation. We must guard against such reductionistic approaches to God's redemptive work.

The articles in this issue focus our attention on God's gracious work at Calvary as the only work of merit necessary, indeed, the only work of merit sufficient to procure human redemption. Read them with thankful hearts and renewed joy, understanding that "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free" (Gal. 5:1).

Carolina Lectures

THESE ARTICLES ARE summaries of some of the speeches presented at the 50th Annual Carolina Lectures. A book containing all of the lectures is available from the Hickory Church of Christ, PO Box 397, Hickory, NC 28603-0397.

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Studies in Galatians

Another Gospel?—Galatians 1:6-10

By Dennis Conner

SEVERAL YEARS AGO I PREACHED the funeral of one of my uncles. Though he had been a Christian all his life this man approached death with fear rather than the calm and assurance that befit a Christian. He approached his death with the fear that he had not done enough. In a Bible class I was teaching, a middle-aged woman who likewise had grown up in the church, expressed her own fear, and the fear of many others, with this question, "How can you really know now that you are saved? No one ever does all that they're supposed to do." My uncle and this sister, as well as many others, had fallen victim to an ancient but subtle heresy, a heresy that in the modern church has often been preached and taught as sound doctrine. It is the same error that occasioned Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia, the error of something that purports to be gospel but is in reality no gospel at all. It destroys peace by undermining the very foundation of our justification.

Paul wrote to the Galatians, "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel than what you have received, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:6–9 NKJV).

It is typical in Paul's letters to find an expression of thanksgiving at this point (see Rom. 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:4; Eph. 1:15–16; Phil. 1:3ff; Col. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:2; and 2 Thess. 1:3). To the Galatians, however, Paul expresses astonishment rather than thankfulness. "I marvel..." he says. The conduct of the Galatians is to him incomprehensible. Why? What is the conduct that has elicited such an emotional response from Paul? It is their swift desertion of God for a false gospel. They have abandoned "Him who called you in the grace of Christ." They have not simply abandoned a doctrinal position; they have turned away from God and the grace of Christ in which he had called them. In the statement "...who called you in the grace of Christ" we find the crux of the matter. They had deserted God **and** His grace.

Paul marvels that the Galatians would turn so easily and quickly from God and His gospel to a different gospel, which was in reality no gospel at all. The Galatians had been thrown into a state of mental confusion by what were apparently Judaizing teachers. The cause of their confusion was the teaching of a perversion of the gospel of grace. These Jewish–Christian teachers taught, in essence, that you add your own works to the work of Christ. There is no evidence that they ever denied Christ, or that Christ died for our sins. They believed in Christ. However, as we see in the broader context of Galatians, they also believed that in addition to belief in Christ there must be submission to the law of Moses (most notably, the rite of physical circumcision). That is, the believer must **add** his own works to the work of Christ. The bottom line—you earn your salvation. The fundamental nature of the gospel of Christ is grace (salvation is a gift, not earned). The Judaizing teachers were troubling the church by denying the fundamental nature of the gospel and establishing a different basis for justification: works. They were persuading many of the Galatian believers to turn from the true gospel of grace to a false "gospel" of works, which was no gospel at all.

Paul's response to the Judaizing teachers and their perverted gospel was the harshest pronouncement of accursedness possible. Let those who proclaim anything other than the gospel of grace come under the wrath of God Himself! Thus, the issue at hand was not merely a difference of opinion; rather, it was a matter of the most serious kind. To paraphrase Paul, he pleads, "If **anybody**, whether it be me or even an angel direct from heaven itself, should come to you with a gospel different from the one already preached to you, let him be accursed!" The language is strong and passionate, indicating the seriousness of the problem. The glory of Christ and His work was at stake, and the potential consequence for people's souls was severe.

The only work that has merit for our salvation is the work of Jesus Christ on the cross as our perfect sinbearer, and it is work initiated and carried out by grace.

The Message for Today

The letter to the Galatians, and this text in particular, still speaks powerfully to the modern church. First, we need always to be reminded that the heart and core of the Christian gospel is grace, not works of human merit. At times the lines of this all-important distinction still tend to get blurred. For instance, in a Bible class several years ago I asked the question, "What is the grounds (the basis) of our salvation?" An elder of the church responded without hesitation, "Why, our works are." The unsettling thing about that experience is that this was a good man, a respected church leader, who had no realization that his response would have brought a cry of "anathema" from the lips of Paul. Just recently a man who has spent his entire life in the church offered this explanation of how grace works, "We do all that we can and the grace of God takes up the slack." While this view is not nearly as prevalent as it once was, it still exists in some quarters, and it is still dangerous. It suggests that our salvation is partly merit, and partly grace. However, the New Testament knows nothing of a salvation that is fifty percent merit and fifty percent grace, or seventy percent merit and thirty percent grace, or even ten percent merit and ninety percent grace.

While we must beware of extreme and erroneous views of grace that would absolve the believer of any responsibility and that would view faith acts such as baptism as works of merit, we must be just as wary of the reactionary extreme that sees salvation primarily in terms of what we do. Works salvation, regardless of how it is expressed and who teaches it, is a perversion of the gospel of Christ and leads the believer away from the God who has called us in grace. It is quite biblical to speak of "the obedience of faith;" that is, obedience as the expression of our faith in response to the grace of God. It is quite another to see our works as having some saving efficacy in and of themselves. The only work that has merit for our salvation is the work of Jesus Christ on the cross as our perfect sin-bearer, and it is work initiated and carried out by grace.

This text also provides us with a test by which all that professes to be gospel preaching is to be measured. The test for preaching is this: Does it convey God's grace first and foremost? It is the message that gives status to the messenger, not the other way around. Regardless of the appeal of a man's message, or the size of his following, if his message does not elevate the grace of God, he is not God's messenger. Even though many found the message of the Judaizing teachers appealing and followed them, the Judaizers could claim no divine authority for their gospel of works. Whether it was their intention or not, their teaching devalued the cross, and undermined God's grace. They were not gospel preachers. They were cursed preachers.

This text challenges us to keep in perspective the core issue of salvation and the fundamental nature of the gospel, which is grace. This was the issue in Galatia, and it is still the issue today.

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Studies in Galatians

Justified by Faith—Galatians 2:15-21

By Tim Sensing

LET ME READ TO YOU THE FIRST AND last lines of the *Emancipation Proclamation*. "That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever, free.... And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God."—Abraham Lincoln

Historians have mixed reviews about Lincoln's personal views. From my study, it appears to me that Lincoln was universally anti-slavery, but not an anti-racist. He did not advocate complete equality. He shared the racial prejudices of his contemporaries. He was a man of his time who spoke about slavery and slaves differently. In Lincoln's debate with Frederick Douglass, he articulated what today would be considered strongly racist sentiments. "I will say then that I am not, nor ever have been in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races. That I am not nor ever have been in favor of making voters or jurors of negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people; and I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will for ever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race."

Lincoln was a moderate. Frederick Douglass wrote, "From the genuine abolition view, Mr. Lincoln seemed tardy, cold, dull, and indifferent, but measuring him by the sentiment of his country—a sentiment he was bound as a statesman to consult—he was swift, zealous, radical and determined."

Lincoln did not foresee the impact of the *Emancipation Proclamation*. His thought and his actions evolved over time. If he would have lived, most historians believe, reconstruction would have been a positive experience for both the South and the African-American. Maybe the Civil Rights Movement would have come earlier rather than being so tardy.

Lincoln did not foresee the impact of freedom. Freedom brought equality. Freedom brought opportunity. Freedom has helped us as a nation to grow toward, although not yet accomplished, the unity Paul spoke about in Galatians, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Lincoln's journey to social justice eventually led to the civil rights movement in our lifetime. Lincoln's journey to social justice would not and could not lead to re-enslavement of slaves after the war. The result was African-Americans sitting in the front of the bus and not colored slaves in chains. The result was equality.

Although not foreseeable in Lincoln's day, we now have an African-American sitting on the Supreme Court and an ethnically diverse Congress. Can you imagine an African-American Professor of English not only advocating a return to slavery but selling himself back into bondage. Can you imagine the granddaughter of a share-cropper signing a petition for the repeal of the *Emancipation Proclamation*?

How much more should freedom be loved by those of us who at one time were enslaved to sin and law-keeping principles? Can you imagine a Jew, once accepting Jesus as the Messiah, enslaving himself again to the Mosaic covenant? Can you imagine a Gentile who never knew Phariseeism, enslaving himself to the bookkeeping righteousness of legalism? The cross makes a difference!

Some today, like the KKK or neo-nazi

groups, still forcefully proclaim anti-black sentiments. Civil rights threaten their ideas for a perfect society. Paul's emphasis on faith also threatened his Jewish Christian opponents and their understanding of God's covenant. Some Jewish Christians from Jerusalem were threatened by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, they proclaimed a legalistic understanding of the Law which perverted the very Law they believed in. They proclaimed a legalistic understanding of the Law which perverted the very gospel they also claimed to believe in.

Let's examine the fundamental ideas to Judaism's sense of identity: First, Jews held the conviction that God had made a special covenant with the patriarchs. The central feature of that covenant was the choice of Israel to be God's peculiar people. God had given them the Law as an integral part of the covenant. The Law showed Israel how to live within that covenant. God's covenant was God's atonement.

Even Ten Commandment Law was given as a response to God's gracious activity. "Then God spoke all these words: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me...."

Paul tells us in Romans seven that the Law is "holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good." And a few verses later he states, "We know that the law is spiritual." But the culprit is sin. The Jews, by their own sin, abused this understanding and it resulted in a yoke of slavery they themselves could not bear. It resulted in their strong sense of special privilege that led to their hatred of other nations. By abusing the Law, by making it into a legal system of justification, the Jews became self-righteous. And self-righteousness leads to death.

Paul states, "We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners" know that a man is not justified by observing the law..." (Gal. 2:15–16a). What does Paul mean by "justified by observing the law?" Let me offer these observations: (1) "Works of the law" are those things that characterizes one as being in the covenant and not simply getting into the covenant. Obedience to the law in Judaism was never thought of as a means of entering the covenant only or of attaining that special relationship with God. It was more a matter of maintaining the covenant relationship with God. (2) The expression "works of the law" is a self-evident expression for Paul's readers for he does not define it explicitly. Although Paul used no word for "legalism," "works of the law" is the expression Paul uses to express the idea of "legalism" or "Phariseeism." (3) "Works of the law" are those things that a typical Jew placed his confidence in for salvation. Law observance documented his membership in the covenant. A Jew's righteousness demonstrated him as a loyal member of the covenant.

Jewish Christians then equated dietary laws (Gal. 2:11–14), circumcision (Gal. 5:6; 6:15), and Jewish holidays (Gal. 4:9–10) as boundary markers for their identity. These Jewish Christians were demanding strict obedience to these rules for justification. Jews cannot live like Gentiles. Gentiles cannot continue to live like Gentiles and be good Christians. Gentiles must learn to live like Jews. Jewish Christians were enslaving themselves and some unsuspecting Gentiles to a yoke of slavery. This yoke of slavery was contrary to the Gospel. Paul called it "another Gospel." They were enslaved, though emancipated, and enslaving others who had also been emancipated.

Have you ever heard of 3x5 card religion? This is when a Christian writes down good advice upon a 3x5 card to carry around in his pocket, or tapes it to the bathroom mirror, or puts it under a magnet on the refrigerator door. When the Christian is driving down the road, he can pull out his 3x5 card and read its advice. He can commit it to memory. He can incorporate it into his life.

Let's pull out a 3x5 card. It reads, "Pray every morning for forty-five minutes. It is best done when you use a prayer journal. Record your prayer requests and God's answers." That's good advice. No one here would argue with that. But if forty-five minutes every morning is good, so would be forty-five minutes at night. What about forty-five more at noon? Why not fifty minutes? If fifty minutes makes me spiritual, then two hours surely will. Now we are up to six hours a day. If you are not praying six hours a day, brothers and sisters, then you must not be spiritual.

I've even seen Scripture placed on 3x5 cards. In fact, I have over a hundred myself. The problem comes when there is abuse. 3x5 cards is only a method. The danger comes when that stack of 3x5 cards becomes a canon within the canon. It becomes a stack of rules. Opinions become requirements. Scriptures become what they were never intended to be. I'm not justified by Scripture. I'm not justified by law. I'm not justified by keeping the rules. I'm not justified by obeying steps. I'm not justified by five acts or three principles or anything else. I'm justified by the blood of the Son! 3x5 card religion does not save me, nor does it keep me saved. Justification comes by faith.

I'm not justified by Scripture. I'm not justified by law. I'm not justified by keeping the rules. I'm not justified by obeying steps. I'm not justified by five acts or three principles or anything else. I'm justified by the blood of the Son. 3X5 card religion does not save me, nor does it keep me saved. Justification comes by faith.

But don't I need to have a basis to know for certain that I'm saved? Don't I need to have a plan or a commandment? The rich young ruler asked, "Isn't there just one more commandment that would guarantee my salvation? I have kept all the 3x5 rules. Is there something more?" The Scriptures teach, "Thou shalt not covet." The rich young ruler replied, "I have kept that since my youth." "I have not coveted. Since I've kept all the Scriptures, I'm saved. Unless there is one rule I've missed. Is your stack of 3x5 cards taller than mine?" You see, the rich young ruler was guilty of using the Law as it was never intended to be used, as a means of justification. 3x5 card religion can only demand, judge, forbid, and condemn. The fault is not in the law, but in the sinner's abuse of the law. You see, 3x5 card religion does not save me, nor does it keep me saved; it only brings me death.

Paul rejects 3x5 card religion. "We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' know that a man is not justified by observing the law [3x5 card religion], but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law [3x5 card religion], because by observing the law [3x5 card religion] no one will be justified.... I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law [3x5 card religion], Christ died for nothing!" (Gal. 2:1–16,21).

Jesus Christ only! Jesus is an exclusive and singular gospel! Liberty! Not legalism!

What is "Justification by faith?" First, let's lay common ground: (1) All of us have sinned and are in need of a Savior. None of us is righteous. Our righteousness is but "filthy rags." It is not a matter of wandering around some place, we are lost. It is not a matter of being sick, we are dead. The dead are utterly powerless to raise themselves. (2) Justification is not unconditional; otherwise, there would be universal salvation. Biblical faith goes beyond acknowledgment to trust in God's power to do what He said He would do. We are saved by "grace through faith." (3) We are all in agreement here and the case does not have to be argued that salvation is by "grace through faith and not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). Faith is the proper response to the cross. Faith never stands alone. Salvation is never based upon our having faith in and of itself. Faith always has an object. It is in Jesus Christ that I place my faith. Faith without Christ is not biblical faith.

God does all the work in salvation. God sent His Son. God raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand. When one is baptized through faith, God puts to death the old self of sin. God raises that new self to newness of life. God forgives the sin. God sends His Holy Spirit. God is the one who justifies. We put our faith, our confidence, our trust, in God's action. We are justified by our faith in what God has done. We are justified in what God accomplished at the cross some two thousand years ago. Therefore, we stand in God's presence as righteous because of our faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ. By faith, the cross becomes present reality.

My prayer life, my Bible study, my evangelism, my service, my worship, my obedience all come from my response to what God accomplished at the cross. It does not mean that if I give up the rules and regulations that I will somehow be a sinner again. That is what Paul is arguing in Galatians 2:17–19: "If, while we seek to be justified in Christ, it becomes evident that we ourselves are sinner, does that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! (*me genoito)!* If I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove that I am a lawbreaker. For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God." Righteous living is not nullified by the nullification of law-keeping.

I do not become a sinner by getting rid of law. To reason like this indicates that one is operating with a wrong definition of sin. The real sin would be to re-assert distinctions in the law that force Gentiles to live like Jews. The real sin would be to insist on law-observance as a condition of being in God's people. The real sin would be to re-assert that faith in Jesus Christ is not sufficient for acceptance with God.

Being justified by faith in Jesus Christ both enables us to enter and remain His people, acceptable to Him. Our relationship is restored with God. Paul declares, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved and gave himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Christ is our master now. We cannot place ourselves into bondage to another. Being crucified with Christ released us from 3x5 card religion, and all other authorities to which we formally subjected ourselves, as well.

Liberty not legalism, yes! But also, Liberty not license. "I do not set aside the grace of God..." (v. 21a). Some become enslaved again to their own emancipation, because they do not live as God intended them to live. They turn liberty into an excuse to do whatever they want. They either nullify God's grace by submitting to a 3x5 card mentality, or they nullify God's grace by submitting to sin. It's as though there were only two options: Legalism or License. I either submit to law-keeping, or, on the other hand, I sin. Paul proclaims the gospel is opposed to both those extremes. The opposite of those extremes is faith. Faith continues to be the guiding principle for my abiding relationship with God. Faith controls me. Paul deals with the abuse of liberty that turns freedom into license later in the letter.

Paul wants us to know the liberty we have to live in Christ. We have liberty because we have been "justified by faith in Christ Jesus." We have liberty to live the way God intended from the beginning. God created us in His image. Our sin marred that image. In Jesus Christ, God recreated us through new birth. He restored our relationship with Himself. He justified us by faith, so that we have the power to live in freedom, to live in liberty, to live in emancipation, to his glory now and forevermore. Amen!

Tim Sensing serves the Mebane Street church in Burlington, NC. Contact him at PO Box 1816, Burlington, NC 27216-1861

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Studies in Galatians

Sons, Not Slaves—Galatians 3:21-4:7

By Ernie Thigpen

"WE'RE LUCKY," SAID GEORGE as he and his dog walked together down the street toward his once fine restaurant which now stood in shambles. The L.A. quake of 1994 had flattened George's place of fine dining leaving only a spare spoon and a couple of chairs as souvenirs.

"We're lucky," George insisted. "The quake struck in the middle of the night, no one was here, no one was hurt. We're alive, that's what really matters."

"Now you might not consider yourself lucky if you were George," the CNN reporter voiced over the TV images. "The only reason George's restaurant was located here in the hardest hit part of the San Fernando Valley is that before last year, this use to be his restaurant." The image quickly cuts to a restaurant being pillaged by looters during the L.A. riots of '92.

"Yea, we were lucky during the riots at my old restaurant," George continued. "The restaurant hadn't opened for the day, no one was there, no one was hurt. We're alive, that's all that matters."

The reporter persisted, "Now after the destruction of your second restaurant in less than a couple of years, you'd probably want to go home and get away from it all. George would too, except that this is his house." The video changes scenes again, this time to a house engulfed by flames during the '93 L.A. fires. "Boy, we were lucky on that one," maintained George. "My dog was outside and I was away so no one was hurt. We lost basically everything, but we're alive and that's what counts."

The reporter asked the viewers, "What do you do when you've lost two restaurants and your home? You do what George and his dog do most every day, go for a walk on the beach." The scene shows a beautiful, golden sunlit beach. The camera pans back to show George and his dog. And for the first time you notice: George's dog has only three legs. "What happened to your dog?" inquires the reporter. "Oh," George sighs, "when the fire trucks came to put out the fire at my house, one ran over him. But he's still alive. It only cost him a leg. See, I told you we were lucky."

George is living temporarily out of town with friends. "After all this, are you planning to move back into L.A., George?" concludes the news person. "Why, of course I'll move back to L.A. It's the best place on earth. Life in L.A. is so totally free. Everybody should live out here."

People under the law weren't just lucky. They were truly blessed. In God's grand design, His law provided supervision, discipline, education and protection for His chosen children. "The law was our disciplinarian," writes Paul (3:24).

In many Greek and Roman houses, well-educated slaves took the master's children to and from school and watched over them during the day. Sometimes they would teach the children, sometimes they would protect them, sometimes prohibit them, even discipline them. While the children were not brought to life by this person, they were in many respects brought up in life by him. While this person was not the children's father, he was their guardian, guide, and governor. He provided an invaluable service to both the father and the children. In some cases, a deep affection was said to have developed between these surrogate fathers and the sons of the master.

But little boys grow into men. They don't always need their "disciplinarian." A marine drill sergeant at officer's candidate school puts wanna-be lieutenants through the unimaginable as their instructor. But the sergeant's ultimate goal is to stand at the end of the training and salute these same men as his superior officers, knowing even as he salutes he has made them ready for whatever may come. And such is the case with the law. Notice Paul's emphasis on the law's temporary function. "But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian" (3:25). Additionally, verse 24 argues for the temporary nature of the law, "The law was our disciplinarian until Christ came."

Paul is saying several things about the Jews and their law. Just as in his disciplinary role the guardian did not give life to the children, so too, the law was not given to provide life to the people of God. Teach them, protect them, prohibit them, even discipline them, yes. But give them life? No. The law regulated their life preparing them for whatever was to come to them in maturity. The law linked them to Moses. And Moses linked them to Abraham. And Abraham was their link to God. Little wonder Jews felt so much affection for it.

Perhaps it was this fondness or their devotion to the Law that kept the Jews from seeing it's dubious side. The law imprisoned the Jews. The law made them slaves. They just didn't know it. "Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed" (3:23). When this term, "imprisoned and guarded," was applied to a city, it meant military guards of sufficient strength had been posted arround the walls so that no enemy could get in, but also it meant no citizen could get out (Stott, John R.W., **The Message of Galatians: Only One Way** (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1968), p. 96).

On one occasion Jesus offered freedom to Jews who already believed in Him. They denied they had need of liberty. "They answered Him, 'We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, "You will be made free"?'" (John 8:33). That's a pretty bold statement for people of a nation that had been held captive by Rome for many years. Denial is not a new weakness. They said they were heirs of the promise. Jesus told them they needed freedom. Jews have always treasured their role as inheritors of the promise. Paul tells the Galatians, if the heirs are children, they might as well be slaves. And under the law, they were still children.

"My point is this: heirs, as long as they are minors, are no better than slaves, though they are the owners of all the property; but they remain under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father. So with us; while we were minors, we were enslaved to the elemental spirits of the world" (Gal. 4:1–3).

It was no honor to be a slave. A slave was a thing, a commercial asset. It could be bought, traded; it could be thrown away. It could be beefed-up physically so as to bring a good price or to handle the most demanding of physical labor. It could be starved if times were bad enough, no buyers to be found, no work to be done. In such times it was worth more dead than alive. In short, slaves were completely under the omnipotence of their masters.

It's hard to imagine an inheritor to a family fortune, much less to the eternal inheritance, being the equal of slaves. Yet, no matter how wealthy the father may be, his minor son could not really enjoy that wealth. No matter who his father was, the child was still under the supervision of that trusted guardian. The child could make no decisions, and even though he was the future owner of a vast estate his status was essentially the same as the slave. Why? He, like the slave, lacked the one indispensable gift that would change both from slave status to manhood. And what was that gift? It was the favor that Jesus offered on that day to those believing, denying Jews: freedom.

Paul says while under the Law, you were slaves, because freedom had not yet come. He also says because of Satan's perversion of the Law "we were enslaved to the elemental spirits of the world" (4:3). "God meant the law to be a stepping-stone to liberty; Satan uses it as a cul-de-sac, deceiving his dupes into supposing that there is no escape from its fearful bondage" (Stott, p. 105).

This picture is bleak. Slaves blind to their plight. Future heirs to the promise whose status is no better than those in bondage. Pilgrims who think they travel the road to freedom only to be demonically hoodwinked into a dead-end street where Satan waits to ambush them. Can there be any relief any time soon?

"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law..." (Gal. 4:4–5a).

There was a set time when, in the ancient world, boys became men. In the Jewish world, on the first Saturday past a boy's twelfth birthday, a father took his son to the Synagogue where in ceremonial rites, the boy became *A Son of the Law* (Barclay, William, **Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians** in *The Daily Study Bible* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976) p. 33,34).

In Greece, a boy, at the age of twenty, in a ceremonial act at the festival called *Apatouria*, cut his long hair, offered it to the gods, and was accepted into the clan as a man (Barclay).

In Rome, between the ages of fourteen and seventeen, on a date selected by the father, a boy took off the garment of his youth, the *toga praetexta,* and put on the garment of adulthood, the *toga virilis* (Barclay).

Paul reminds the readers that at just the perfect instant of time, the Father moved. He moved when the world was ready religiously—when the Law of Moses had completed its work of preparation. He moved when the world was ready culturally—when the Greek language was spoken throughout the world. He moved when the world was ready politically—when Rome had provided a stable peace and a secure system of roads. But it was also at just the perfect instant of time for man. People thought they lived in the best of places, in the best of times, with all the freedom anyone could ever need. But what they really were was slaves. Every last one of them. Slaves.

So God moved. He sent His Son to ransom from slavery all mankind. These former slaves now can enjoy the freedom the same Son offered those descendants of Abraham. They can have freedom from the austere training of the Law because "Now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian" (3:25). They can have freedom from racial inequity because "There is no longer Jew or Greek," (3:28). They can have freedom from class injustice because "There is no longer slave or free," (3:28). They can even have freedom from gender bias for "There is no longer male and female," (3:28). Freedom and equality have become inseparable. "For all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (3:28).

Freedom and equality are invaluable. Slaves dare not hope for more. But there is more. There is sonship. Sonship with the Father. Sonship through adoption. Sonship in the Son. Yes, God sent His Son "In order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children" (4:5).

If the blessings of freedom are inestimable, the gifts of sonship are an absolute windfall. For the Jew there was no greater confidence than his Abrahamic lineage. Yet, for these adopted sons, "if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise" (3:29). Perhaps the greatest attraction of the law, the link to Abraham, and God eagerly imparts it upon these, His adopted children. For the young men, there was no better moment than when they received their new garments as they came of age. But for those the Son came to redeem, "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (3:27). This moment of union and immersion into the Son marked the time where the garments that were the former life were discarded, and robes of new life in the Son, "in Christ," were put on. Even beyond that, the Jews sought honor through their "father" Abraham, while the children of that day sought worth via their earthly fathers. However for these adopted offspring, "Because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" (4:6). Sons and daughters are so close to God the Father through His indwelling presence, their hearts dare utter to Him the most intimate expression for a Jewish dad, "Abba."

Paul summarizes the transformation, "So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God" (4:7). With all that the law took away, and with all that God offers through faith in Christ, we are tempted to ask, "Is anybody thinking of going back to the law?"Amazingly, like George in L.A., some were answering "yes" in Galatia. Worse, some were insisting that others join them. Sadly, some of us today seek the phony freedom of our own set of laws, all the while denying we are in bondage. And we are eager to enroll others in our self-imposed slavery. Jesus told those sons of Abraham, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." (John 8:31–32). Perhaps we can't handle the truth. Denial can be comforting. With our heads in the sand, at least we won't see any spiritual earthquakes, fires, and riots that might be heading our way.

On April 19, 1993, after a year of planning, Julio Ramerez took off from Key West Florida in a single engine plane. His destination, a roadway on the Cuban coast. His objective, rescue his family who had been denied departure from Cuba. Julio had defected over two years earlier. He had tried every possible legal and diplomatic channel to have his wife and their three sons released to join him in America. Nothing had come close to working. Finally, he decided he could no longer live without them. Secret messages were sent to his wife to meet along a stretch of ocean highway. There would be no way of knowing if the word had reached his family until he landed. He flew only feet above the waves to avoid Cuban radar. He saw the coastline approaching. His heart was in his throat. At first, he saw no sign of his family. Then a brief motion beside a palm tree. It was his wife. He landed, stopping just feet from an oncoming truck. His family was there. They jumped in the plane. Off they flew. Once airborne, there was fifteen minutes still remaining in Cuban airspace where at any second they could be shot from the sky by some high-tech weaponry. The attack never came. After they landed safely in Florida, a wonderful reunion took place. The youngest son was asked by a TV reporter, "What did you do when you saw your father for the first time in two years?" The boy replied, "I wanted to hug him, but he told us there was no time for that." "But weren't you scared?" the news person inquired. "No, not at all. I was with my papa. I just kept saying his name. I knew he would keep me safe."

Jesus Christ came on a suicide mission to set us free. When we truly accept His freedom, His Spirit in our hearts keeps calling, "Abba, Father." And somehow we know, He will keep us safe. When Jesus sets us free we aren't slaves any longer, we're His children. That's what really matters.

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Studies in Galatians

Called to Freedom—Galatians 5:1-5

By Jeff Payne

THEODORE MUNGER TELLS OF Kaspar Hauser, who a half-century ago appeared in the streets of Nuremberg, after having been released from a dungeon in which he had been confined from infancy. Hauser had never seen the face or heard the voice of man, nor had he gone outside the walls of his prison or seen the full light of day. Later, a distinguished lawyer in Germany wrote a legal history of the case, which he entitled "A crime against the life of a soul."

In some ways, the first few verses of Galatians chapter five could be labeled "A potential crime against the life of a soul." In this section of his correspondence with the Galatians, Paul makes a passionate plea for freedom. Chapter five marks a turning point in the letter as a whole. It is here that Paul takes the thought from the theoretical argument to personal application.

Galatians 5:1-5

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free." The ideas found in the opening verses of chapter five are linked directly to the closing thoughts of the previous chapter. Basically, the point is that as believers we are descended/rooted in the free woman (4:31). Jesus died for us on the cross so that through faith in Him, we could live as free people. He has liberated us from the penalty and guilt of sin, divine wrath, satanic domination, the Law's curse, and the fear of ultimate judgment. Earlier in this letter, Paul had taught this (3:22-23). Paul embellishes this idea in his letter to the Christians at Rome. A clear and graphic illustration of this point is found in the debilitating struggle to keep the law in order to win God's favor (Romans 6:17-18).

Also, he has freed us to enjoy a new kind of life—one in which we can live by the Spirit's power, joyfully obey God, love and serve others, come immediately into the Lord's presence through prayer, and grow in our walk with God. In John 8:34-36, Jesus brought to light the idea of the joys of sonship when he said, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

Jerry Jones, in his book, **From Slavery To**

Sonship, writes concerning our redemption and freedom: "Human courts can justify (render the accused guiltless), but the judge doesn't adopt the accused and make him a part of his family with full rights of sonship. However, spiritually, God forgives and adopts the accused in one complete motion. Our forgiveness, a simple judicial decision, is the result of a God who wants us not only to be pardoned but to be His!" The thought, then, is that Christ has liberated us for the purpose of freedom.

Thus far in the letter to the Galatians, Paul has used two illustrations (comparisons) to explain the critical problem of dependence upon the law as a redemptive means for salvation. The first illustration was that of a "child-leader" who was to serve as a guardian to keep man under the care and direction of another with little or no personal freedom (3:24-25). The second illustration was of the slave woman (4:22,30-31). The point? If you could choose to be like a mother and son, you would not select Hagar and Ishmael; you would choose Sarah and Isaac who were free. That brings us to Paul's third illustration. Here he uses the concept of the yoke to describe what it is like to live under law.

"Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery" (5:1b). A bit of historical understanding is important in order to grasp the impact of Paul's third illustration. The Jewish nation had been enslaved to foreign powers for most of the past seven hundred years. Their forefathers had felt the yoke of Egyptian slavery (Lev. 26:13), and since the time of the literary prophets, the Jews had worn the yokes of the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Romans. The Jews didn't like to be reminded of their slavery and even tried to forget it. When Jesus taught about the truth setting men free (John 8:32), the Jews had a quick answer: "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone" (John 8:33). Consequently, the comparison of the yoke carried a bad connotation.

Paul urged his readers to "stand firm" and not to return to any form of slavery. Prior to their conversion, the Galatians had been burdened by a yoke, and it was Paul's desire that this not happen again. "Stand firm" which translates a verb having intensive force, suggests a tenacious stand in and for freedom. "Burdened" is the rendering of a Greek verb whose literal meaning is "to be held in." In this context the suggestion is that the readers are in danger of being held in, that is, restrained by a yoke.

A yoke was used to get oxen to perform and produce work that they would not willingly do if they were free. The yoke of the law was unbearable for those who had grown up subjected to it (Acts 15:10); so, the Gentiles who had grown up without it didn't stand a chance to conform to it. As believers, it is important for us to always remember that God never commands us to submit to everyone regardless of who they are or what they say and do. We are called to exercise wisdom to discern between truth and error, right and wrong, and the genuine article as opposed to a fake (Matt. 7:15-23, 10:16, 24:23-26; Heb. 5:14; 1 John 4:1-6). So when people tell us we need to follow their works-centered plan to become acceptable to God, we must "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3) and flatly refuse to give up our priceless gift of freedom.

Why was the yoke of the law attractive? Because it offers a quick-fix in producing behavioral changes and in ceasing from life-dominating sins. The beauty of this is that the changes were immediate, visual, and radical. But Paul knew that these changes, fueled by the law, would not stand the test of time. The outward, fleshly actions can be controlled only so long by law, for if the "want to's" aren't dealt with, a real transformation won't occur. The yoke of the law will make a person "sit down" on the outside while he is "standing up" on the inside.

The ultimate point is that there is more to the Christian life than behavioral changes. A person can be trained to act like a Christian without ever being a Christian. This "acting" can have its dynamic in a yoke that puts the untrained under the direction of a leader, or the untrained can be yoked with the trained and perform identically. Only without the yoke can you ascertain if the inner man has truly been changed. Paul is teaching in this letter that lasting, joyous Christian conduct must flow as a result of Christ being formed within the Christian (2:20; 4:19).

"Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace" (5:2–4). Next, Paul explains the danger in abandoning faith in the work of Christ for faith in man's ability to perform redemptive works (5:2-4). Paul's language at this point becomes somewhat stern, almost indignant. Speaking with the full weight of his apostolic authority (notice the phrases which are used, "Mark my words! I, Paul...," and "Again I declare..."), he warns his readers that they must chose, once for all, between Christ and the law. If the Galatians accepted circumcision four results would naturally follow. First, "Christ will be of no value to you at all" (5:2b). The general sense is that in receiving circumcision (as a condition of salvation) the readers put themselves in a position in which Christ will be of no advantage to them. He is of advantage only to those who trust him exclusively.

A second result of accepting circumcision would be the individual's obligation to obey all the law. "Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law" (5:3). The false teachers didn't necessarily want the Galatians to obey the whole law; but if they accepted part of the law, logic would demand obedience to all the law. Apparently, the readers did not know this.

A third result of accepting circumcision would be alienation from Christ. "You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ" (5:4a). The thought is that a reversion to the law means that one's relation to Christ is cancelled. All connection with Him has been severed. Christ must be everything to a person or He is nothing. Christ can't share in a gospel based on human effort and works of human righteousness.

A fourth result would be falling "away from grace" (5:4b). When the Christian proclaims that he can't save himself, but then obeys circumcision, he's guilty of open contradiction. Obedience to a gospel of human effort brings about separation from grace, and grace is really the only means by which man has ever been saved. There are two ways for a man to be lost. One is to follow a lifestyle of rebellion against the will and ways of God (1 Sam. 15:23). Another is to try to save himself, which is an insult to God. Paul's readers should now have an understanding of the dangers of legalism. The Galatians not only had bought an additional religious policy, but also had lost the insurance they had gained from Paul's gospel of grace. Paul now switched from the negative to the positive and told the Galatians what Christians expect, "For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness" (5:5 NASV). Note that Paul changed from "you" to "we." He declared that by faith (not works), we eagerly wait (not work), through the Spirit (not flesh), for the righteousness we hope. Paul's hope wasn't wishful thinking, but honest expectation.

John Westfall, in his book **Coloring Outside The Lines**, reminds us that God provides us with what we need to meet the critical concerns of our lives. "On my son Damian's ninth birthday we went to see the premiere of the movie *Labyrinth*. It's not exactly a life-changing motion picture, but Damian was so excited that he threw up in the planter box outside the theater just waiting in line to go in. The story featured a young girl on a quest to rescue her baby brother from the evil gnome king. Along the way she encounters frightening obstacles to block her way, and she also acquires a number of fellow travelers to share her journey. The worst obstacle is the dreaded Bog of Eternal Stench—a slimy lake of ooze that reeks foully and that carries a terrible curse: If you fall or step into the bog, the smell will stay on you for eternity. A pretty frightening thought for a nine-year-old and his parents. As might be expected, the travelers, in trying to cross the Bog of Eternal Stench, get stuck in the middle of the lake, unable to reach the other side, and the ground on which they are standing begins to sink into the bog. It looks as if there is no hope, nowhere to turn, and no one to help. They are trapped with no way to escape their terrible smelly fate. Just then one of the creatures, a large hairy monster, throws back his head and cries out in a loud wail. Suddenly, with much bubbling and churning from the depths of the oozing bog, a rock arises onto which the whole company can step to reach the safety of solid ground. Resting on the other side, the little girl turns to her monster companion and asks why the rock came out of the water to help them at just the right moment. The hairy creature answers with simple monster logic, 'Rock....my friend.'"

We, too, are on a long and difficult journey. But God has given us all we need to make the journey. One of the most surprising and beautiful gifts he has provided us with is that of freedom. This freedom is so important and precious. It is not to be feared, but embraced. In other words, "Freedom...our friend!"

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Live by the Spirit—Galatians 5:16-21

By Ross Thomson

RECENTLY, THIS REPORT APPEARED in the **LA Times**. "LOS ANGELES—A Los Angeles County parking control officer who ticketed a Cadillac parked illegally on Peru street in South Central Los Angeles on Friday morning got no excuses from the driver sitting stiffly behind his steering wheel.

"The motorist had been caught fair and square, illegally parked next to the curb on street-sweeping day. The parking officer left the ticket and drove off without an argument.

"But there was another reason for the driver's silence. He was dead, shot in the head perhaps as early as 13 hours before his car was ticketed...."

The article goes on to say that the man was "noticeably dead," had "severe rigor mortis," and that the corpse was "discolored." Furthermore, the officer "had to reach in the window right past the body" which was "as stiff as a board" to put the ticket on the dash!

The episode gives a whole new meaning to the expression, "long arm of the law," doesn't it? Yet, surprising as the officer's behavior may be, it is nothing more than a reasonable manifestation of the legalistic mentality. The law can have a long arm but short sight, becoming rigid and blind. When it majors in minors it, therefore, minors in majors, inevitably undermining our humanity. Legalism is not merely foolish: it is unfeeling and unloving. No wonder religion tainted by this blind way of thinking is roundly rejected by Jesus and Paul as incompatible with the message of the cross.

Our problem, as we stand at the cross, is not that a few edicts have been violated—not that we have a hard time with the rules. The problem is that we are confronted by a corpse—our own—for "you were dead in your transgressions and sins" (Eph. 2:1). The purpose of the cross is not to point out wrongs, but to give life. What the world needs is not a new code, but a power that can put life into a carcass. We sinners do not need a traffic cop to pin a ticket on our lifeless chests, but someone to give us CPR, to raise us from the dead and to revive us with the sanctifying strength of His Spirit.

Thanks be to God, that power was provided at the cross and the Spirit of God continues to be the breath of life to the Christian. Such is the beginning and end of the matter. Case closed. The cadaver is alive by the power of God. This is the gospel.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to avoid the feeling that, even so, we still ought to proclaim a new system of rules.

So then, what if I were to suggest that the Truth about life remains in essence a matter of correct patterns of observance, or that religion should emphasize church polity, and sound governance and procedure. What if I suggested that the newly–energized corpse should henceforth concentrate on practicing and proclaiming a new, abbreviated system of writs and ordinances? Wouldn't I still be proclaiming the gospel?

Not according to Paul! To him, such would constitute an abandonment of the "way" (Rom. 7:4–6): "a different gospel" (Gal. 1:6). The apostle is adamant. God has been completely specific on the plan of salvation—it is not for us to determine further requirements. Christianity is about corpses raised from death, taking up their crosses, dying daily—a miraculous manifestation of God's power—not a display of formality, propriety, rule or ceremony, however logical and reasonable such might appear.

But why is Paul so fired up? Why is he so condemnatory of the "Judaizers?" Was circumcision such a terrible practice? Couldn't a good argument be made on his opponents' side? After all, didn't Paul himself circumcise Timothy? (Gal. 5:11). What's good for one is good for all. Why not circumcise everybody?

The answer is clear. What is good for Timothy is not good for everyone else, and for the same reason. People must see that the gospel transcends culture and tradition. The gospel must never be allowed to become identified with a particular culture or a particular pattern of observance (Gal. 2:14). If it were, then it would be obscured—its power negated. To Paul, circumcision *per se* was neither here nor there. It was simply a non–issue. If an ethnic Jewish evangelist could gain entrance to the synagogue by being circumcised, then he should submit to it, by all means. But if we were to suggest such a thing as a binding religious requirement for anyone else, then Paul might suggest that we consider castration for ourselves! (Gal. 5:12).

The gospel is a matter of receiving the Spirit after hearing in obedient faith. It is God's power—not human observances (Gal. 3:2–5). Tradition and culture should be accommodated insofar as they are neutral, provided such accommodation facilitates the spread of the gospel. They should be denounced the moment they are in any way identified as requirements of the gospel itself. When tradition and culture detract from the eternal transcendent power of the gospel then they must go (Acts 15:12–19). This is the ultimate test of soundness—and, it is also the key to deciding what to do when the Scriptures are silent on a specific issue. In the absence of a binding directive, we do not make a legal matter out of it at all: We rather ask the question, "Will this practice advance or retard the gospel?" Where the letter of the law is a source of division and confusion, the Spirit of Christ is a source of unity and clarity.

The failing of the Galatian teachers was that they could not see the cross-cultural power of the gospel. Thus, they were unable to distinguish feelings of true piety from feelings of nostalgia. They pined for the comfort of a Christian "religious" system to replace the one they had left. However, the power does not lie in the form. The Christian message is not a constitution for an organization. It is not a code of governance and procedure. It is an emancipation proclamation: "It is for freedom that Christ set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1).

God sent a savior—not a legislator. God sent power—not ordinances. And we have Galatians—not the New Testament version of Leviticus.

If the faith of Abraham could flourish for 430 years without the law (Gal. 3:15–18), then why can't Christianity? If the essence of Israel was not its regulations but the eternal promises of God, then how much more is this true of the New Israel? Besides, law is powerless to heal (Gal. 3:19–21); to teach (Gal. 3:23–29); or to mature (Gal. 4:1–7). How can Christianity be thought of as a code, if such has already been tried and found wanting? The promise and the power are what really count; the Spirit's vigor poured out on Gentiles; the Gentile corpses now resuscitated by the divine *Pneuma*, from death in sin: the future hope in the resurrection.

Salvation is by the Spirit's power; not by religious ordinance. We were corpses—now we are "alive in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16), through the sacrifice of Christ at the cross.

The gospel of salvation proclaims that we are now animated by the divine presence. This is the source of Christian hope. This is what one should preach, live and die for. The power of the Spirit has made redundant all attempts to legislate righteousness. According to Paul, one can summarize the whole Old Testament pattern with "a single command: Love your neighbor as yourself" (Gal. 5:14). However, the entire Old Testament could not make that happen. Nonetheless, what was impossible in a plan was possible in a man. God sent a savior—not a legislator. God sent power—not ordinances. And we have *Galatians*—not the New Testament version of *Leviticus*.

"Alive in the Spirit!" This is the gospel. How can anyone ever backtrack from that? Old Man Death is in retreat. A rotting corpse is now alive and well because it received the Spirit when it was born again (Gal. 3:2). Law as such has no power—either to bring about the rebirth itself, or to sustain the new life (Gal. 3:21). Spirit and flesh are the only opposing forces (Gal. 5:17). Only the Spirit can defeat the flesh. Law isn't even one of the combatants! After all, "the acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity...etc." (Gal. 5:19–21). We don't need the help of the law, even as an ally. Furthermore, if I give my allegiance to a code rather than a person, then I'm in the wrong army, for, "If you are led by the Spirit you are not under law" (Gal. 5:18). And, conversely, if I am under law I am not under Spirit.

How, then, do we distinguish what is sound in faith and practice? How do we legislate with confidence when the Scriptures are not specific?

Paul is quite clear on the matter: "For in Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6). The answer is not to legislate on the issue at all. It doesn't matter one way or the other. However, when opinions, when procedures, when customs become identified with the gospel itself; when these peripherals become dogma—to bind or ban as questions of faith; then we must come to the defense of the gospel.

How do we distinguish faith from opinion? According to Paul, opinion is that which does not in any way detract from the power of the gospel of salvation in the Spirit in Jesus Christ. Opinions, one way or the other, are harmless until they become tests of orthodoxy. When they do so, we have left the gospel and reverted to legalism.

"So I say, live by the Spirit..." (Gal. 5:6).

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Brotherhood News

By Michael R. Mobley

KANNAPOLIS, NC...KIRK SAMS REports the appointment of four elders: Wilson Burton, H. R. Butler, Frank Crunk, and Ed Hill. The congregation had previously been without elders. RALEIGH, NC...The Brooks Ave. church announces the 1994 North Carolina Evangelism Seminar, August 12–14. This year's theme will be *Today's Families: Building and Strengthening Relationships*. SPARTANBURG, SC...The Central church will host the Marriage Enrichment Seminar conducted by Drs. Carl Brecheen and Paul Faulkner, April 29–30. For information, contact Ernie Thigpen at 803/582-7453. BOILING SPRINGS, SC...James Meadows has returned to the Carolinas. He is working with the new church in Boiling Springs. To contact James for meetings, etc., you may reach him at 225 Shoally Park Ct., Spartanburg, SC 29303 or telephone: 803/599-7186. SALISBURY, NC...Joe Adams has also returned to the Carolinas. He served the West Innes church from 1971 to 1980. Since then he has preached for the church in Mt. Dora, FL. SUMMERVILLE, SC...John Johnson will be with the Trolley Road church for a Leadership Workshop April 15–16. CHARLESTON, SC...The Essex Village church will host a Ladies Day on April 23 with Doris Black of Austin, TX as featured speaker. The theme for the day will be "What Every Woman Needs to Know." GREENVILLE, NC...The 1994 Eastern North Carolina Youth Rally will be conducted May 6–8. The theme for the weekend will be "They Were Called Christians!" Featured speakers and study group leaders will be Dale McCorkle, Don Giles, Dennis Conner, and Winfred Felton. YADKINVILLE, NC...The 8th Annual Small Church Workshop is scheduled for May 12–13. The theme this year will be "Worship: Praising God in the Small Church." STATESVILLE, NC...The Northview church will be hosting the area-wide Pot Pourri Weekend II, April 8–9, a ladies retreat to be held at Carolina Bible Camp & Retreat Center near Mocksville, NC. NASHVILLE, TN...The 47th Lipscomb Lectures, will be conducted June 12–15 and the theme will be "Real Christianity." Associated with the Lectures there will also be an Elders Workshop, June 11, and a Conference on Premarital Counseling, June 16–17.

Send news items to Michael R. Mobley, PO Box 312, Mooresville, NC 28115-0312.

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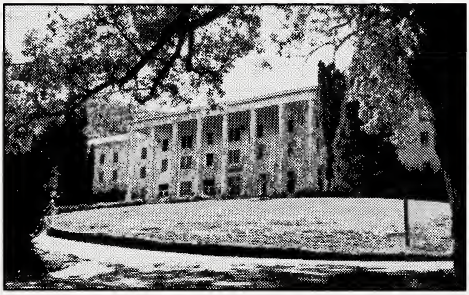

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

VOL. 36, NO. 5 MAY 1994

I have a friend.
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a big fine house,
a degree and
No husband because
he has mid-life crisis.
I have a friend.
She has a Cadillac,
a big fine boat,
a lake view and
No health because
she has mid-life cancer.
I have a friend.
He has no car,
no big fine house,
no degree nor
boat or lake view but
He is the Husband who will never leave,
the Giver of eternal life because
He was the mid-life Sacrifice.
– rita

Carolina Christian

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Editorial

By Johnny R. Melton

WITH THIS ISSUE OF ***CAROLINA Christian*** I complete my first year as Editor. My appointment began with a stint as interim editor, but the Board of Directors made the appointment permanent in October. I want to express my gratitude to the Board for the confidence that they have expressed in me, and for their continuing support. The first year has not been without its trials. Our editorial policy has been challenged, some of our articles have been criticized, and some of our readers have decided to read us no longer. However, there has been far more positive than negative response to our editorial policy and to the articles that have appeared in the magazine. And while we have suffered some cancellations, some of our former readers have renewed their subscriptions, and we have added new readers, so that, overall, our paid subscriptions are up about 10% over this time last year.

1 Samuel 7:12 records "Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, 'Thus far has the LORD helped us.'" Like Samuel, I want to erect a monument to God's help as the door closes on the first year of my tenure as Editor. While I am grateful to the Board of Directors, to my talented Editorial Staff, to contributing authors, and to our dedicated readers, ultimately, I am grateful to the gracious providence of God for His sustaining hand. I truly believe "Thus far has the LORD helped us." To Him and to our Lord Jesus be all the glory both now and forever and ever. Amen.

Editorial Staff

During this past year, I have had the privilege of assembling an Editorial Staff to assist me in planning for the topics to be featured in the magazine month by month. The Staff is now in place and evidence of their work has been seen in the February issue on Obadiah and in the March issue on Church Leadership. Upcoming issues will feature articles on the following topics: A Caring Church, The Book of Exodus, Church History, Resolving Conflict, Worship, The Gospel of Matthew, Resident Aliens, and Forgiveness.

Members of the Editorial Staff include: Dan Blazer, Dennis Conner, Mike Mobley, Jim Mullican, Ron Newberry, Jerry Senn, Tim Sensing, Ernie Thigpen, and Paul Watson. I am grateful to these brethren for their involvement in the planning and production of *Carolina Christian*. While I bear ultimate responsibility for the content of the magazine and must bear the blame for the mistakes that are made (which is as it should be), the credit for improvements that have been made in the magazine must be shared with these brethren. It is our prayer that this magazine will continue its long tradition of service to the churches of the Carolinas in a positive and constructive way.

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The Church as Family

By Dan Blazer

MANY OF US BEMOAN THE DECLINE of the family in America. The family, as most of us remember it while growing up, is no longer the norm in the United States. Mom, dad, and the kids are no longer living together, much less having a family devotional together. Divorce rates are high, teenage pregnancies continue to increase, and single parent families are ever more present in our neighborhoods and our congregations. Parental discipline has lost much of its effectiveness in controlling the behavior of our children. Christian children look around them and see their friends unsupervised and undisciplined. Why should they obey rules which none of their friends must obey? Schools have become unsafe as well as unfocused in their mission. Those of us who have been fortunate enough to marry and remain married to a Christian and raise Christian children find ourselves in the minority, even in our churches. We not only grieve for the loss of the family, we fear the disintegration of the social fabric of our country.

One response to this fear is to withdraw into our churches as havens of the American family dream. We praise the nuclear family (two parents and the children) from our pulpits, we hold marriage enrichment seminars to strengthen our families, and we develop special ministries for the family, such as a ministry to the Young Marrieds. We tend to gather in cliques of intact families for our social outings. It's much more comfortable when we don't have a single or widow to join us. We may find ourselves praising God much more when a family places membership who has just moved from a church in Texas than when we convert a divorcee with her teenage son from down the street. Intact families are just more safe and predictable.

It's only a short step from glorifying the intact family in our congregations to a desire for our congregations to be one big, happy family. Honestly, that is exactly what I would prefer. After a tough day at the office, working with people who value lifestyles much different from my own, I want to feel comfortable and secure when I go to church on Sunday morning. I want members of my church to behave like a good family, that is, I don't want them to have any problems, and I want them to be as much like me as possible. That way, I will not be at a loss for conversation, and nobody will put demands on me. If I can't withdraw into my church family, where can I turn?

The church of Christ is not the family of the American dream. Yes, there are many characteristics of congregations of the Lord's church which should parallel characteristics of a good family. We should love one another, be available for one another, pray for one another, and study together. We should show our love in our hospitality, inviting members of the congregation into our homes (as if they were family). We should check up on one another to make certain everything is OK. Even though we act like family, however, I believe that if we are doing our job for the Lord, our churches will be anything but a comfortable family gathering. Why? Because we are commanded "Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find" (Matt. 22:9). We are to "make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19). We sing "The blessed gospel is for all, the gospel is for all." This is hardly the way that I would build my own family. This is not the way I would protect my family from the influence of the world.

My wife and I value our family and we are careful how we build our family. First, we each chose to marry a Christian. We made certain, as certain as we could, that conflict over our faith would not be an issue in our marriage. We raised two beautiful children from birth, children whose heredity came from my wife and me. We always exercised care regarding those whom we asked into our home, especially if we wanted someone to stay with our children when we were away. We raised our children with certain cultural values which have been important to us. For example, we raised our son and daughter to enjoy good literature, and good music. Good literature to me consists of the classic writings of Western Civilization. Good music is classical and easy listening. Our tastes do not always agree with those of our children, but they do have an appreciation for what we value in literature and music.

We do not build congregations of the Lord's church like we build families. We build congregations, not by transplanting Christians from one part of the country to another, but by converting non-Christians who live next door. God adopts His children, children who have been raised by the world, and we are to welcome His adopted children into our fellowship. We emphasize Christian values, and de-emphasize our own cultural values. There are Christians who do not share my view of good literature. I can't argue that my tastes are the correct tastes, for tastes vary greatly. I can't insist that they try to like what I like in the way of music. I have no right to ask them to be like me in any way except in whatever way I follow the Way of the Master. If we want to build a family-like atmosphere, we must work overtime, for we don't necessarily start with the most homogenous material for building a family.

During New Testament times, the churches were far from harmonious. Many parties had arisen in the Corinthian church, so many that the one church in Corinth was actually multiple churches (1 Cor. 1:10–12). The churches in Galatia had wandered so far away from the gospel as preached by Paul that the apostle was absolutely astonished! "You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?" (Gal. 3:1). Paul's frustration sounds much like a parent who has almost given up on a rebellious child, not like the father of the Cleaver family of the popular TV show *Leave it to Beaver*. The church in Ephesus had many members on an ego trip, wanting to be in charge. Paul must remind them that the body of Christ is made of many members, "some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11). Churches built of members from every race and strata of the Roman empire had difficulty maintaining harmony, even though some of the members had probably seen Jesus in the flesh. We should not be surprised that our congregations have similar problems today.

Perhaps God knew that we would be disappointed with our churches. Perhaps He doesn't wish us to feel too comfortable and secure on Sunday mornings. Perhaps He must continually remind us that our congregations are made up of persons who are not perfect, but rather persons who are saved. Perhaps He does not want us to cease working to make our congregations better places, just as a good parent will work overtime to overlook and to overcome the faults of a difficult child. Perhaps He wishes us to be astonished at His love when we find ourselves comforted and loved by our brothers and sisters in spite of their faults and our faults, not proud of ourselves for having built a little heaven on earth in our congregations.

God wishes us to be as patient with our congregations as with our families. Though we idealize the American family, most of us grew up in families that were far from ideal. Even our families may not be as safe and secure as we remember them. Stephanie Coontz suggests as much in her book **The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap**. She believes that "Families have always been in flux and often in crisis," and the family of the fifties was not the haven we think we remember. Most of us have faced, at times, major challenges within our families. Our response has typically been to defend the family and to work with our brothers, sisters, parents, and children because "they're family." We should take the same attitude with our brothers and sisters in Christ. "Let us not become weary in doing good...especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (Gal. 6:9,10). If we extend the hand of help and the patience of love to our families, this help and patience will not return to us unrewarded. It is much easier to love those whom we help. It is much easier to love those who are weak when we accept their weaknesses, just as we accept the weaknesses of our children and ourselves.

If we are realistic about families, then the churches of Christ are like one big, but not always happy family. If we try to make out of our congregations the ideal American family, then we are going to be disappointed and frustrated. We must let God's grace cover our congregations, and let His power work in our weaknesses. Good can come from even the most conflicted and contentious congregation.

Dan Blazer, M.D., Ph.D. is the J.P. Gibbons Professor of Psychiatry and Dean of Medical Education at Duke University. He is a deacon in the Brooks Avenue church in Raleigh and a member of the Editorial Staff for ***Carolina Christian****. Contact him at PO Box 3005, Durham, NC 27710-3005.*

I See, I Saw, I Have Seen, and I Believe!

By Lewis C. Forrest, Jr.

CONSIDER THE EMPTY TOMB OF Jesus. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and the other women stand in mixed fear and joy. They realize that the body they came to anoint is gone—the Savior has risen as He promised!

If we look beyond our English translations and investigate what the Spirit inspired John to record for us, the account in John 20:1-9* (NASB) tells us more than we might see at first reading.

In verse 1, John says that "Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and *saw* the stone already taken away from the tomb." Note the word "saw." It appears in various English renderings four times in these nine verses (verses 1, 5, 6, 8), but John, by inspiration, used three distinctively different Greek words in recording these events. To grasp the full meaning of what John recorded, we need to examine the three words he used.

In verse 1, John recorded that Mary Magdalene *physically observed* (**BLEPO**) that the stone had been removed. It was instantly evident to her that the stone had been moved. She could see that it no longer covered the entrance to the tomb. It had been rolled aside. It was no longer a barrier to entering the burial place of the Master. She observed its new location. She simply took note that it was not in her way as she had expected. It was a passing observation. Mary was not physically blind; she observed that the stone had been moved; it was a singular look leading to an instant conclusion.

Mary and the other women rushed to tell the disciples of the resurrection. Peter and John ran to the tomb to see for themselves. Note in verse 5 that John ran ahead of Peter and "stooping and looking in, he *saw* the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in." The Greek word for *saw* is the same word (BLEPO) used in verse 1. John was physically aware that the linens were there and that the Savior was gone. He literally "saw at a glance" that Jesus was not there.

However, when Peter arrived, seconds later, he did more than John or Mary Magdalene had done. In verse 6, "he beheld (*saw*) the linen wrappings lying there, and the face-cloth, which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself." How was Peter's observation different from the observations of the other two? The Greek word **THEOREO** is used in explaining Peter's visual behavior, which has a dimension not present when **BLEPO** is used. Peter "beheld" the strips of linen and the burial cloth. That is, he "looked and perceived details."

Peter physically went into the tomb and looked around at everything that was left behind by the risen Savior. He was looking for clues that would explain what had miraculously occurred. He noted that the body was gone and that the wrappings, all the wrappings, were left behind. He was thorough in his inspection of the tomb. Peter was looking to perceive the details of the situation to the fullest extent.

The significance of Peter's more-thorough action was underscored by the Holy Spirit in inspiring John to use a different word to describe accurately what occurred. While the word is often translated "beheld," it's also correctly translated "saw" in several English translations, even though the added dimension of the meaning is obscured.

Peter probably had something to say about what he saw. After all, he was rarely speechless, even in stressful or emotional situations. His response to this situation caused John to take another look.

John was having trouble believing that what he had physically observed was true. His adrenaline was no doubt flowing and blood was

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rushing to his head. Perhaps the run had caused him to imagine things. He needed confirmation of what he had been told and was now experiencing. He needed another look.

So John took a second look. When he did, "he saw, and believed." Note that a third Greek word, **EIDON**, is used here to describe John's visual behavior. The Spirit led John to use a word which literally means that suddenly John "grasped the significance" of what he was physically observing. He "observed, perceived, analyzed, and understood." He saw with insight and it caused him to believe.

It's unfortunate when our language obscures the richness of what was originally recorded. After all, most of us can't read Greek. Without a sermon that drew this passage to my attention and a Greek dictionary to study it further, I might have gone through life missing this rich lesson.

Let's make application of what these three Greek words, each correctly translated "saw," can teach us. We often look into the Scriptures and casually observe a great truth. We know it's there, but we don't let it touch our lives. In a sermon or Bible class, or through individual study, we may see more within the passage, take note of certain details, and consider with some curiosity the significance of the information. However, until we "observe, perceive, analyze, and understand" what we're reading and studying, we're unable to fully *believe* the message.

If you had been at the tomb early on the first day of the week on that first-century morning, what would you have believed? Could you have accepted that Jesus had taken up His life, victorious over the grave? Would you have only looked and walked away skeptical, willing to consider that perhaps the body had been stolen? Would you have wept with horror or wept with joy? Would you have seen the details or been satisfied with the superficial?

Our society is usually satisfied with the superficial. Many are willing to consider that perhaps a man named Jesus lived and was an outstanding, although eccentric, teacher of good. Maybe He was crucified because He advocated unpopular religious and political beliefs. Maybe He was not in the tomb on that Sunday morning. Perhaps He even was resurrected. But so what? Why is that important to me in my busy world?

If we expect others to believe, we must first be willing to stop what we're doing and take the time to "observe, perceive, analyze, and understand." We must each truly believe that our life in this world, as well as our life in the world to come, depends on the reality of the resurrection. Jesus defined the problem in His time in this way:

> *While seeing, they do not see,*
> *and while hearing, they do not hear,*
> *nor do they understand*
> (Matt. 13:13).

In response to this sad condition, Jesus quoted the prophet Isaiah concerning the callused hearts of the people who would not see, hear, understand, or be converted. He was pleased because the twelve disciples had eyes that saw, ears that heard, and hearts that longed to "observe, perceive, analyze, and understand" that they might believe and be saved (Matt. 13:16).

A true disciple has the heart of a student. He or she is committed to learning as much as possible about the Master, His ways, and His teaching, and then emulates the life of the Master as closely as possible. To do this requires more than a passing glance. It even requires more than an investigative observation. It requires the kind of vision that "observes, perceives, analyzes, and understands" to know the Master intimately and fully trust in Him with a faith that pleases God.

**For additional details, compare the accounts in Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; and Luke 24:1-12 in several translations.*

Lewis C. Forrest, Jr. is a training consultant in the hotel and restaurant industry and can be reached at Route 2, Box 490, Ayden, NC 28513. He is active in the church that meets in Greenville, NC.

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Reflections

By Susan Edwards

FEBRUARY 21, 1994—MY FRIEND, David Clinard, died last night. This morning was cloudy. The rain came about noon. In the afternoon the sun shone brightly. That seemed appropriate.

I first met David when he interviewed me for a job with Agape of NC. He was Director of Family Services. I don't remember much about the interview or my impression of David. Child placement was a new field for me. I had a lot to learn, and David was a good teacher. I soon felt quite comfortable because of the confidence I quickly developed in David's professional skills and his ethical values. I knew everything would be done in the proper way. That working relationship certainly enriched my life.

You didn't know David long until you got to know Nancy and the boys, Joshua, Zachery, and Benjamin. David loved to tell how he and Nancy met, and her influence in leading him to Christ. It was one of his favorite stories. Nancy was the epitome of a helpmeet during David's illness. Her love kept him from despair. David's heart was always with his boys. He was a wonderful role model and his boys always knew that he loved them.

David had cancer for thirteen months. He fought the disease with a zest for life that was unbelievable. When you visited him, he always wanted to know what was going on in your life. He so wanted to live to see his boys grow up and to grow old with Nancy. That didn't happen, but David was confident in his relationship with God. That confidence was a great comfort to him, and to all of us who knew him.

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The church in North Carolina will miss David's skills as a counselor and his influence for good. David was a true friend. He had a way of making you feel special. I'll miss his easy smile, his crazy sense of humor, his thoughtfulness, his inquisitive mind and his joy in being a child of the King.

There was a great cloud when we learned of David's illness. The rains came when we knew that he was not going to get well. The sun shines now because "Blessed are those who die in the Lord..." (Rev. 14:13).

Goodbye, my friend.

Susan Edwards lives in Statesville, NC and is a member of the Northview Church of Christ where her husband Walter is the pulpit minister.

Editor's Note: *David R. Clinard was born February 27, 1952 to Martha and Don Clinard in Charlotte, NC. After graduating from High School, he graduated from East Carolina University and Florida State University where he received a Masters in Social Work degree.*

David always worked in the human services field. He worked with the City Welfare Division of Jacksonville, FL as a social worker. He was a social worker and house parent for Sunnybrook Children's Home in Ridgeland, MS. He was Director of Professional Services at Childplace in Jeffersonville, Indiana. He came to Agape of NC in 1985 as Director of Family Services. After leaving Agape, David had a private practice, Clinard Counseling and Professional Services.

David and Nancy had three boys, Joshua, Zachery, and Benjamin. The family were members of the Friendly Avenue Church of Christ in Greensboro where David served as a deacon.

David died February 20, 1994 following a year long battle with cancer.

Memorials may be made to Friendly Avenue Church of Christ Building Fund, 5101 W. Friendly Ave., Greensboro, NC 27410 or to Carolina Bible Camp, PO Box 1000, Mocksville, NC 27028.

Editor's Note: This article was written for the March issue on Church Leadership. It is a timely article written from the heart of a devoted shepherd.

"Stir Up Your Minds"

By George Stevenson

THE VOICE ON THE PHONE ASKED me to write an article for publication in ***Carolina Christian*** magazine. The voice suggested that I might want to write something in reference to my service with Highland Acres Church of Christ (formerly Belmont) in Statesville, North Carolina. This is the first time I have written anything for publication, and you probably would have known this without being told, but I read somewhere that honesty is the best policy.

I am a member of Highland Acres Church of Christ and my whole life has been with the same congregation from my youth. Many things have happened over the years that should be shared with others; however, most of them escape my memory at this time. There is however, a thought from 2 Timothy 1:6 that has lingered in my mind, of which I will write. The verse has this phrase in it, "Stir up the gift of God which is in thee." It is true from reading Paul's letter that no doubt Timothy had been given a gift by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery (1 Tim. 4:16). The purpose of this article is not a study of the gift that Timothy was given. My purpose is to put the idea in the mind of each Christian of stirring up your pure mind to exercise your talents and abilities to the spiritual edifying of the body of Christ in your congregation, and how doing so will help to improve your home and church families.

Timothy is reminded here even of the faithful parenting of his mother and grandmother in the home and community. This Scripture (2 Tim. 1:5) must be taught often to parents and children so that both may understand and appreciate the spiritual growth that can be enjoyed through study and obedience to the teachings of Christ. Timothy is referred to here as a faithful, beloved son, yet Paul takes time to remind and encourage him to make good use of the gift of God that he has been given.

As I study 2 Timothy 1:6–8, it reminds me of individual responsibility for my actions. The parable of the talents recorded in Matthew 25:14–30 is an excellent example to teach Christians to prepare for service so that when we are called together to serve as those servants were, we may be able to serve with joy and thanksgiving. The parable of the talents and those servants is often seen among Christians today. Many Christians can see and willingly accept responsibility even for those things which belong to others, while others refuse to accept personal responsibility for their own souls's salvation.

Paul continues by telling Timothy that he has not been given the spirit of fear, but the spirit of love, of power, and of sound mind. Many Christians have been given much ability and many opportunities to serve God in many instances just as the servants we read about in Matthew 25:14–15, and in numerous cases our actions are after the bad example of the fearful servant. Why do some Christians use their abilities with courage, love, and devotion while others procrastinate in fear, weakness, and self-pity? Could it be that we are afraid to stir up the abilities that God has blessed us with and to use them in service to Him.

The Gospel is God's power to save (Rom. 1:16) and must be understood and used by His church to teach man how to obey God in order to be forgiven of his sins that be may be saved. It is to be taught in the spirit of love (Eph. 4:15), so that the teacher and the pupil may grow up in Christ who is head of the church. Timothy is told to never be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, or of Paul the prisoner. This encouragement, written to Timothy and for every Christian, is to be firm in defence of the gospel of Christ and in support of faithful Christian principles, even in unfavorable conditions and circumstances (2 Tim. 1:8). Faithfulness requires every Christian to be active participants and partakers of whatever afflictions true service to Christ may bring our way. Are we standing with

Christ or standing afar off, warming with the enemy, as Peter did on at least one occasion?

Each Christian should take some responsibility for teaching God's message to others. Many Christians think it the sole responsibility of preachers, elders, and the Bible School teachers to do all the teaching. Because of this attitude many remain weak and fall victims to Satan's snares.

Parents must take time to teach their own children and to keep close check on what they are taught by others. A study of 2 Timothy 3:15 will show that from a child, Timothy had known the Holy Scriptures. Each parent, and grandparent, should be moved and motivated to teach their children as Timothy's parents were. There is a great need in the world for serious study and respect for the Word of God. We must say this need is even in the Church of Christ family as well.

May we resolve today as we read Paul's letters to Timothy to study the Bible, to respect God's Word, and to live as He directs. The Bible is the word of God, the way of God, and will lead the faithful believer to an eternal home with God. The Bible was given to man by God to guide his pathway. It will direct the pathway of the man/woman who will allow it to "stir up the gift of God" in them, unto which I appeal. The Bible will give the Christian the ability to know the difference in right and wrong, good and evil, the way of God versus the way of man.

George Stevenson serves as an elder for the Highland Acres Church of Christ, Statesville, NC.

A Little Fire

By Rita Watson

THEY MET BY CHANCE ON A SATURday evening in the railway depot. Al, Jack, John, and Harold represented the four Denver papers. *The Times, The Post, The Republic,* and *The Rocky Mountain News*. Each was there to dig up a story for the Sunday editions. The reporters were in the railway station hoping to find a visiting celebrity arriving on the evening train. None arrived and the reporters began to commiserate with one another. For them no news was bad news.

Al declared that he was gonna make up a story and turn it in. The others laughed. Someone suggested that they all four walk over to the Oxford. Jack said they liked Al's idea about faking a story so why didn't all of them fake a story? John said Jack was thinking too small. What they needed was a really big story that they could all use. A domestic story would be too easy to check out, so they began discussing foreign ideas that would be difficult to verify. China was far enough away; so they thought they would write about China.

John suggested that a group of American engineers had stopped over in Denver on their way to China. It seems that the Chinese government is making plans to tear down the Great Wall. Our engineers are bidding on the job.

Harold wanted to know why the Chinese would want to destroy the Great Wall? John thought, then said that they were tearing it down to symbolize international good will and to welcome foreign trade.

By 11:00 P.M. the four had worked out the details of their story. After leaving the Oxford they would go to the Windsor Hotel, sign four fake names to the register, and tell the desk clerk to inform anyone who asked that four New Yorkers had arrived that evening, had been interviewed by reporters, and left early the next morning for California.

The Denver newspapers carried the story the next day. All four of them on the front page. *The Times* headline that Sunday read "Great Wall Doomed, Peking Seeks World Trade."

Of course, the story was phony. A lie, made up by four loose tongues. But their story was believed and expanded upon, first by eastern papers, and then by papers abroad.

When the Chinese learned that the U.S. was sending a demolition crew to tear down their national monument, most were indignant, some were outraged. Particularly incensed were the members of a secret society. A volatile group of Chinese patriots who were already tired of foreigners. They, inspired by a lie, exploded. They stormed the embassies and slaughtered hundreds of missionaries.

In two months 12,000 troops from six countries joined forces and invaded China with the purpose of protecting their own countrymen.

The bloodshed that followed, sparked by four unthinking tongues in a Denver hotel in 1899, became what is known today as the Boxer Rebellion.

It is the same with the tongue. It is a small part of the body, but it brags about great things. A big forest fire can be started with only a little flame. And the tongue is like a fire. It is a whole world of evil among the parts of our bodies. The tongue spreads its evil through the whole body. The tongue is set on fire by hell, and it starts a fire that influences all of life" (James 3:5–6, New Century Version).

Rita Watson says she heard this story used in a sermon delivered in Texas. The preacher credited the story to Paul Harvey's radio program, "The Rest of the Story." Rita lives with her family at 903 Oak Street, Marion NC 28752.

You Are Important

By Rob Albright

IN THE SPRING OF 1969, I WAS A TEENager from the farmlands of Ohio who joined the U.S. Navy. I received training to be an Hospital Corpsman, and, before long, I was overseas in Vietnam. I remember fear, real bullets, panic, and people hurting and dying every day.

When the bullet hit my shoulder, I remember feeling extreme pain, and then passing out. When I awoke, I found out that some of the Marines I was in the field with had pulled me to safety, protecting me from further harm. You see, a Navy Corpsman was a pretty important person to a detachment of Marines in the rice fields. He was usually the only medical person for several men. The Marines wanted to be sure the Corpsman was kept alive. The Corpsman was treated with respect and made to feel pretty important.

As a Corpsman, I did not have the same job or responsibility as the Marines, but I was respected for what I could do, and the responsibilities that I did have. I was important enough for them to risk their own safety to rescue me, without even taking time to think about it. We depended on each other, and knew any loss was a serious loss for all.

In the body of Christ there needs to be the same acceptance and protection of one another (Rom. 15:1–2; 1 Cor. 12:25). There needs to be that "sense of belonging." No one should be ignored or made to feel unimportant. As children of God, we are somebody! VIP status all the way!

With the right attitude about one another we should be able to put away petty differences, refrain from passing judgment, and avoid putting stumblingblocks in the way of our brothers and sisters (Rom. 14:13, 19–20). Let's focus on staying alive in Christ. We don't want to lose anyone in this battle.

Rob preaches for the church in Thomasville, NC. Contact him at 612 Lakeview Dr., Thomasville, NC 27360.

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Facing Crises in Today's World

By Robert Curry

THE THREAT OF CRISIS AFFECTS everyone of us regardless of our background, socio-economic condition or educational level. Whether it is the threat of disease, an unforeseen and tragic accident, the ravages of some natural disaster, or simply the threat of threat itself in a world torn by violence, crisis, in some form, will eventually find its way into our lives.

What are we to do? At the time of any crisis, we must realize our source of power, our place of refuge, and our champion and protector. We must look to Jesus.

Crisis in the Bible

The Bible records that the servant of God is not immune to the torment of this world. David faced the treacherous death of his sons Amnon and Absalom (2 Sam. 13:28–29; 18:15). Job, in possession of great wealth and prosperity, lost everything short of his own life (Job 1–2). Jeremiah did the will of God to warn His people of coming destruction and received threat and abuse for his work. Egypt faced the death of their first-born because of the stubborn heart of Pharaoh (Exod. 11:5). Paul was imprisoned, abused, threatened, and shipwrecked as he traveled preaching the truth (2 Cor. 11:23–28).

Yet, in crisis, the Bible reveals that God was the champion of His people. David, in spite of losing his sons, found the comfort of God (Psalm 71:12–21). Job was given a double portion of his former prosperity (Job 42:10). Jeremiah received the guidance and protection of God through all of his trials (Jer. 1:19). While the first-born of Egypt died, those who heeded the Lord's instructions were spared that calamity (Exod. 12:28–30). In spite of all he faced, Paul still could look forward to a crown of righteousness awaiting him (2 Tim. 4:8).

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Why did this happen? The key to it all is God, His power, and the faith of His people to serve and praise Him all their days.

God Gives Us What We Need

In order that we may face the crises of this world, God gives us, first of all, the desire that all will be well. Indeed, the desire for something is a critical part of success. Any medical professional will tell you that often the difference between a patient's survival and death is his desire to live. How many athletes have succeeded in winning their competition merely because they had the desire to win? Consider the words of Jeremiah: "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord" (Jer. 17:7, NKJV). When my hope is in God, when I want to succeed, the crises of this world seem to take a less threatening posture.

Secondly, God helps to give us the faith that all will be well. It is one thing to desire that we will succeed, but it is another thing, however, to actually believe in such success. Paul wrote, "For this reason I also suffer these things: for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that day" (2 Tim. 1:12). He wanted it and he believed it would happen. Jesus was followed by some blind men who cried for healing (Matt. 9:27–28). Jesus asked if they believed He could heal them, to which they replied, "Yes, Lord." They wanted to be healed and believed Jesus could do so.

Lastly, God gave us the strength to allow us to overcome and succeed. You see, if I desire to overcome and truly believe that I can, I still need the strength to do so. Paul is an excellent example of this. He wrote to Philippi that he did not believe he had reached his goal as of yet, but was willing to continue moving forward "toward the goal of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13,14). He had the desire to overcome and truly believed he could do so because he was confident of the strength given him through Christ (4:13).

Nothing Here for Us Anyway

We often sing:

This world is not my home,
I'm just a passing through.
My treasures are laid up
somewhere beyond the blue.
The angels beckon me
from heaven's open door
And I can't feel at home
in this world anymore.

What happens in this world is only temporary. As a friend of mine has said over and over again, "No one will care in a hundred years, anyway!" No crisis is permanent, for someday it and its effects will pass. That which caused such grief, anger, and despair will be replaced with new victories and further tragedies.

That is why we continue to look ahead, into the face of the Lord who stands waiting for us to come home. Paul wrote, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:17–18). The Christian realizes that whatever happens here is negated over there (Phil. 3:20–21), for we will be prepared for the spiritual life in eternity with God.

Conclusion

To be sure, this world hold much tragedy for us all and no Christian should ever feel immune to such threat. Yet, for the Christian, there is hope through Jesus Christ. In Him we have the tools necessary to overcome the crises of this world and look ahead into the world to come.

That is why we need to accept the power of God to desire that we will overcome, for such desire is the motivation to reach our goal. Yet, merely wanting it is not enough for we must believe that we can overcome, without fail. But, how will we do this? Having the desire to overcome, and the faith that we can, God gives to us the strength to do just that. Tragedy will still come and the world will still wage war on our lives, but we will get by it all, with God's help.

We do so because we realize that there is more to our existence than any worldly problem. You see, this world is not our home; something awaits us on the other side of Jordan. With our eyes upon the face of the Lord, our path steadily moving toward the glory of heaven, and our hand confidently grasped in the hand of Jesus Christ, we will soon find our way home.

With such assurance, there is nothing we cannot overcome.

Robert Curry preaches for the Duncan church. Contact him at PO Box 728, Duncan, SC 29334.

Dictators & The Roar of the Sea

By Alice Gilissen

FOUND IN A SKETCHBOOK OF THE great seascape watercolorist, John Marin, was the notation "Isn't it funny that dictators never live by the sea."

Musing on that thought we learn that dictators may have visited the seashore, but chose not to live there. We reflect further that dictators tend to want total control—do not like something having control over them; and the sea, being a mighty and uncontrollable force, possibly reminds them how hapless we all are. The winds and the waves do not obey the will of dictators who are restless in this environment. They, then, resist what most of us go to the seashore for—the release we get from giving up our tensions to these elements. We have only to walk along a beach to feel the wind tugging at every part of our tight bodies to pull the tensions out, and we "let go" bit by bit. Indeed, we give up our holding patterns without realizing it.

So, then, the Christian has no problem with the strength of the sea because he has chosen to be controlled by the One more powerful than the sea—He who made the sea. In fact, the Christian walk is a slow, but sure, handing over of the controls to God. Yet, if we searched down through history among the famous dictators' lives we would likely find zero-to-none of them who had a "God as Co-Pilot"-type operation.

And so, the Christian does not miss out on the wisdom and the gifting of God. His oceans were created for many reasons of practicality, environmental balance, sanitation, and beauty. He even arranged for the air above the ocean waters to become saturated with water vapors, out of which He forms the clouds. At His bidding, the winds blow these clouds about so that they move over the land and release, in the form of rain, the ocean's dissolved gasses on the all forms of land-based life. These gasses are all-important mixtures of trace minerals necessary for life and healing.

Many Europeans travel yearly to the sea to have their health improved via these trace minerals that enter the lungs by breathing the bracing ocean breezes, and that are absorbed by the skin. While the earth and our air continue to degrade, the sea, away from polluted boundaries, can continue to produce healing vapors for eons to come.

The winds off our shores continue to pull our tensions from us, the negative ions of the surf and the ocean's constant movement continue to cleanse, and the sound of the surf sweeps out competing thoughts as we allow the sea to renew, heal and control us. God in His infinite wisdom knew we would need His creations for balance, food, sanitation, and beauty. The ocean stands as a constant reminder that we cannot control everything.

Yes, Mr. Marin, dictators and the roar of the sea don't go together.

Alice Gilissen is a professional counselor in Hickory, NC. She is a member of the church in Hickory. Contact her at 1780 12th St. NE, Hickory, NC 28601.

A Salute to Logan Jones

By Terry Gunnells

AFTER TWELVE YEARS OF MINISTRY, leadership, and friendship with the Lord's church in St. George, SC, Logan and Arlene Jones have moved to Murfreesboro, TN. I have spoken to the men and women who worked closely with Logan, and to a person, they feel a real sense of loss due to his retirement.

Brother Jones came to St. George after retiring from the armed services. i often told him that his military background gave him the stability that a relatively new, small town church needed. The St. George church has had a steady numerical growth, but the spiritual growth of the men is something to behold. They have been trained to be leaders and ministers in their own right. Several of them have stepped into the pulpit with confidence and are preaching with love and industry until another full-time preacher can be secured to work with the church.

Logan Jones is a compassionate man. I have observed him tenderly care for Arlene as she struggles with serious health problems. Being a counselor, i often gave him a chance to vent his frustrations, but he refused to complain. As a devoted husband, he was willing to make whatever sacrifices that were necessary to care for his wife. He was so busy thinking of the Lord's work that when he had a heart attack about five years ago, he hardly took time to recover before he was hard at work again. His vision for the work of the church reached far beyond the little town of St. George. He personally supported other good works, including this writer's ministry. Not only did he help financially, but he always had measured words of encouragement.

I am indebted to the good people of the St. George church for allowing me to write this salute to our good brother. Any of them could have said things that would have expressed their love and appreciation to him for his ministry among them.

For twelve years, Logan buried their dead, married their young, and held up their hands in times of trial. No wonder the St. George people loved him so much, and commissioned me to write a salute to a great man of God.

Logan Jones's work is not over; he's just working on a voluntary basis in another location. He and Arlene may be contacted at 1319 Gentry Terrace, Murfreesboro, TN 37130; or, by telephone: 615-890-1270.

Terry Gunnells has served churches in North and South Carolina. He currently teaches at Southern Christian University in Montgomery, AL.

Justice Vs. Mercy

By Jeff I. Mann

IN OUR WORLD TODAY IT IS HARD TO find a just judge. When I was in the Philippines I came face to face with the corruption in government and came to realize what a privilege it is to live in the United States. So many of the officials of the various nations can be easily bought for a small price that most people living in those countries don't even remember what justice is. In contrast, we (for the most part) have just judges and trials in the United States, and this is as it should be; this is what we want.

Our Bible speaks of God's justice in both the Old and New Testaments. We are assured throughout the Bible that God is a just Judge. He is just, not only when it pleases Him to be so, but it is His nature to be just at all times. Since we want justice in our courts, we believe that we want God to be just toward us. Nothing could be further from the truth!

In Jude 6 the Bible indicates that God has restrained until the judgment day those angels who have broke His law/s. He is completely just toward them. They broke His law/s and He gave them the penalty of their actions—eternal destruction. But, I want you to notice that they did not receive any second chance. No mercy whatsoever! Is that what we want? Justice without mercy—certainly not. What we really want is for Christ to pay for our sins and for us to receive grace and mercy—not justice.

What is mercy? What rule does it follow? These are questions we need to ask and answer. Mercy does not follow the same rules as justice. It is not limited to any class or group of people. It can be given to whomsoever the giver desires. Mercy abides only by the rules of the one who is merciful. Let me illustrate mercy: The story is told of a missionary who spent quite a bit of time in India. As he would walk down the streets the beggars would surround him begging for some small handout. They could see his fine American clothes and knew he was "rich" by their standards. Of course, with so many beggars surrounding him, there was no way he could give them all something. So he pulled out some change from his pocket and gave some to first one and then another as he desired to do so. What was he showing toward the selected few? Mercy! He gave to the beggars according to his own rules and desires. This beautifully illustrates God's mercy toward us. Not everyone will receive mercy, only those who meet His standards or rules to receive His grace and mercy.

But, what are the rules to receive God's mercy? Well, He made them as simple as possible. He simply has asked that we obey the gospel. Those who obey the gospel will receive His mercy and the remission of their sins. Those who refuse to obey will receive the justice they deserve: eternal destruction. Let's be obedient to the gospel, so God can be merciful.

Mercy, not justice, for me.

Jeff Mann serves the Roxboro Church of Christ and writes a regular column for the local newspaper. Contact him at RR 4 Box 340, Roxboro, NC 27573.

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Was the Tower of Babel Real?

By Walter Wagner

"AND THEY SAID , GO TO, LET US build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. ...Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of the earth" (Gen. 11:4,9).

Many religious leaders claim that the words of the Bible before Genesis 12 are just fable or folk-tales. Even more teachers, and some class materials, teach the Old Testament events on the level of "Mother Goose" instead of examples that demonstrate that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted (1 Cor. 10:6). They are not taught enough as examples to admonish the faithful (1 Cor. 10:11). There is much physical evidence that all the events of the Old Testament were real, including the event of the Tower of Babel.

To explain this physical evidence I will cite material found in publications from The American School of Oriental Research; **The Harper's Bible Dictionary**, 1953 edition; Josephus's **The Antiquities of the Jews; Davis Dictionary of the Bible**, 1898 edition; and **Unger's Bible Dictionary**, 1957 edition. I am using these sources because men cannot agree as to either who built the Tower of Babel, or when it was constructed. For instance, Josephus gives credit for the start of construction to Nimrod, great-grandson of Noah (Gen. 10:8). He suggests the motive for building the tower was revenge against God for drowning their fore-fathers, and to provide a place to escape should God decide to destroy the earth again by water. Josephus's account accords with that of later writers in these particulars: the people had abandoned God for idols, the tower was constructed at Babylon, it was constructed of sun-dried brick covered with fire-baked brick. Josephus quotes from an earlier writing called "The Sybil" and a writer identified as Hestiaeus who spoke of the tower at Babylon (See **The Antiquities of the Jews**, Book I, Chapter IV, Articles 2,3).

The Ziggurat at Samarra

Davis has "BABEL (gate of god) It was the beginning of Nimrod's kingdom." This article also identifies the idol involved: Marduk (See **Davis Dictionary of the Bible**, p. 70). All other descriptions agree with the account by Josephus. Davis suggests "Although work on the tower ceased, yet the place was not wholly deserted. In later years it became the home of a great community." Others have suggested that Hammurabi built the Tower of Babel. Unger credits the followers of Nimrod, though not necessarily Nimrod himself, with the construction (**Unger's Bible Dictionary**, p. 134).

The size of the tower provides a clue for identifying its builder. **Harper's Bible Dictionary** suggests that the structure could have covered a ground area of 300 feet along each side. These dimensions are larger than the Great Pyramid in Egypt. When we consider that the tower was built of sun-baked brick faced with kiln-dried brick, we can begin to comprehend the massive task of building a tower almost 300 feet tall. A tower such as this could not have been completed in one generation with God, and sometimes man, working against it. When construction was abandoned, the normal rains of the Euphrates Valley would begin to destroy the sun-baked brick.

Hammurabi was probably the next king to attempt the construction of the tower. He was an Amorite from the land of Canaan. He migrated northeast into Babylon and became the sixth king in the first Babylonian Dynasty. He ruled forty-three years from Babylon and twelve years from Larsa. Larsa is southeast of Babylon near Ur of Chaldees, the home of Abraham. Hammurabi was one of the greatest of the Babylonian kings. Two items remain to this day from his reign: the Babylonian Flood Stone and the Code of Hammurabi. The Babylonian Flood Stone gives an account of a great flood from the perspective of the Babylonians. The Code of Hammurabi is carved into a six-foot tall stone pillar. The laws are in three categories: the procedure of law, the law of property, and the law of persons. The following account from Harper's Bible Dictionary concerns a tower begun by Hammurabi. In reading the account, it should be understood that a "story" of a temple was from 30 to 50 feet tall. So a seven-story tower would be 210 to 350 feet tall.

"The Tower of Babel (E-te-me-nan-ki—'The tower of the terrace-platform of heaven and earth'), was a seven story ziggurat (pinnacle) or zoned tower-temple of sun-dried brick faced with kiln-dried brick. Each of the tower's six stories formed a platform on which the next was built. The priests used a stairway from the court to the top of the second story and proceeded by a continuous ramp on the outer surface of the ziggurat to the temple on the top. This shrine played a part in the worship of the chief god of Babylon, Marduk, whose large temple was one of the prominent sites of the city.

"The Tower of Babel, long ago in ruin, had a ground plan 300 ft. square. It was begun by Hammurabi and developed by several rulers and was completed by Nebuchadnezzar in the sixth century B.C. Alexander the Great ordered the remains of its ruins cleared away to prepare for reconstruction; but he died in 323 B.C., and his dream was not fulfilled" (p. 55).

It should be noted that another nation also plays a role in this discussion. Asshur (Gen. 10:11) became the founder of the Assyrian nation. His name was also that of their idol. For this reason, many Assyrian kings used a form of his name as a part of their own: Aššur-dugul, Aššur-apla-idi, Aššur-nirari I, Aššur-šaduni, Aššurnasirpal I, Assurbanipal. It was The Assyrians destroyed the first Babylonian Dynasty and after that time and the elements took their toll on the tower, until the rise of Nebuchadnezzar. The Old Testament book of Daniel records that the Medo-Persian Empire destroyed the Babylonian Empire, the tower would have been left in ruins once again. It appears that these could be the ruins that Alexander the Great wanted removed in order that he could rebuild the tower.

Alexander left the dimensions of the tower when he failed to rebuild it. The base of the tower was discovered by the German archaeologist Robert Koldewey in 1899. The base is 300 feet along each side and it is fifty feet high. Such a base could easily support a tower 300 feet tall.

A significant feature of the Islamic faith is its prayer system. Moslems are called to pray five times each day. These calls are sounded from a minaret, or tower, above the mosque. In the 9th century of the Euphrates River valley began to duplicate the ancient ziggurats when building their minarets. One such ziggurat-minaret is still standing in Samarra, Iraq. It is similar to what the Tower of Babel was probably like. It has seven stories extending 295 feet into the air.

Was the Tower of Babel real? The Bible says it was real (Gen. 11:1-11). Tradition says that Nimrod (a real Bible personality, Gen. 10:8) was responsible for attempting to build the first one. History and archaeology associate Hammurabi, Nebuchadnezzar, and Alexander the Great with great towers that could be related to that first failed attempt to build such a tower. Robert Koldewey discovered a base for such a ziggurat. There is great value in learning about the archeological discoveries such as the ziggurat at Samarra which sheds light on biblical material. Truly, the whole earth bears witness to God and His word.

Walter Wagner preahes for the Slater-Marietta Church of Christ. Contact him at 152 School St., Slater, SC 29683.

Book Reviews

By Leslie Sensing

Lee, Glenda. **102 Bright Bulletin Board Ideas**. Abilene, TX: Quality Publications, 1993.

THE NAME OF THE BOOK IS **102 Bright Bulletin Board Ideas** by Glenda Lee. Some of these were so good that they made me laugh. Lots of these bulletin ideas are easy for children to understand. Everyone of these ideas gives a Scripture reference. There is a wide variety to choose from. These bulletin boards will be colorful and bright. They easily catch your attention. If you do not like one, you can find another one you will like better. In the back of the book, there are instructions for each bulletin board.

Sometimes there is a bulletin idea I did not understand. For example, one picture showed a man playing golf. It says, "Bible Class is fore everyone." My dad had to explain to me how the word "fore" was being used. If you ever use this book, I'm sure you will find lots of bulletin board ideas you like.

Leslie Sensing is a third grader and worships at Mebane Street Church of Christ in Burlington, NC.

Also received from Quality is Bible Count & Color by Mary Bachman and illustrated by Arni Anderson.

Brotherhood News

By Michael R. Mobley

WILLISTON, SC...The Halford Street church announces the completion of the renovation of the auditorium and classrooms of the church building. On March 6, the church celebrated with a Bring Your Friend Day and 88 people were present. Steve Ashworth is the local minister. COLUMBIA, SC...Gospel Meeting with David Pharr at the St. Andrews Road church, May 22–25. LUMBERTON, NC...Albert Gardner began working with the church January 1, 1994. The church has ten pews and a pulpit stand that they would like to give to a church that can use them. Any church interested should contact these brethren at PO Box 2608, Lumberton, NC 28359, 910/739-9904. CHARLOTTE, NC...The University Church of Christ (previously the Hidden Valley Church of Christ) announces its new location in a new facility. A dedication service was held on April 17. Phillip B. Thompson serves as the minister. The church is now located at 9920 Newell Hickory Grove Road, Charlotte, NC 28215. The telephone number is 704/599-0529. CARY, NC...The Cary church announces their 1994 Youth Rally scheduled for May 13–15. The theme for the rally will be "Highway to Heaven." STATESVILLE, NC...The Northview congregation is leading an effort to establish a congregation in Cornelius, NC, in Northern Mecklenburg County. They began meeting April 10 in a convention room in the Holiday Inn.

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

VOL. 36, NO. 6 JUNE 1994

A Caring Church

Carolina Christian

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Editorial

By Johnny R. Melton

NOT LONG AGO A LETTER ARRIVED from an old friend. Paul Rodgers, an elder now in the church in Duncan, SC, was serving as an elder in the By-Pass church in Union, SC when my dad moved there to preach in August 1966. I was a lad of fourteen, just ready to enter high school. Paul encouraged me in my efforts at "church work." Later, when I was preaching in Union myself, Paul was living in Newberry, SC. When he arrived in that town, as the result of a job transfer, there was not a congregation of the Lord's church. That soon changed, thanks to the efforts of Paul and his wife, Clara. For a few months while the Newberry church was between preachers, I preached there once each Sunday. That was during the summer I was courting my future wife. Karen and I visited with the Rodgers often that summer (it was a cheap date!) and they encouraged us in our plans to marry and to serve the Lord together. I was glad to get his letter.

However, when I read his letter, I was not happy to learn that he had been hearing rumors concerning my stand on baptism. I am grateful that he was willing to contact me with his concerns (and to identify the source of the rumors). In his letter he asked me some questions regarding fundamental matters. His purpose in asking these questions was to confirm my commitment to the truth so that he could defend me against critics. He was not asking these questions as though he were conducting an inquisition, and for that I am grateful. I have asked for, and he has granted, permission to use his questions and my responses to them as basis for this editorial. Even though Paul identified the individuals who made accusations regarding my soundness (as he should have) no useful purpose will be served in identifying those individuals here.

My Response

What follows is the substance of my response (personal references have been edited).

"I'm sorry you have heard negative reports concerning the Carolina Lectureship. In my opinion, it was one of the best ever, but then, I'm biased. I was particularly dismayed to learn what ___________ is reporting about me. First of all, if he is quoting me as saying 'I was not saved by baptism,' then he is paraphrasing, not quoting. I never said those words. Secondly, you are right to suspect that the statement is being lifted from its context. Given the thrust of my speech, I am completely flabbergasted that I could be so misrepresented. I am sending you a copy of the lecture tape so that you can hear the entire presentation. However, for clarity, I want to quote from the tape so that I can put to rest immediately any doubt that you may have regarding my stand on baptism. In the lecture I say,

"'Baptism and circumcision are not equivalents. And so, for someone to suggest that 'in Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value, and therefore, really, in Christ baptism has no value...oh, its good, or it has some appropriate mark, it helps in some way'—No! Baptism is not to be equated with circumcision; baptism is to be equated with faith. Baptism: its essential character is faith at work—'faith expressing itself in love.'

"'Faith, the mental part of it—and this is where I think we run into problems in the religious world; its where we are having difficulty when we discuss these matters, because we assume that to talk about salvation by faith, that all we are talking about is salvation by mental assent. Paul doesn't know anything about that kind of faith. James doesn't know anything about that kind of faith. Well, he knows something about it, but he doesn't appreciate it. He doesn't commend it. He condemns it. Just as James would say that faith without works is dead, Paul said that faith expresses itself in love. Faith works. Fundamentally, the meaning of the word is faith is 'working' through love.

"'Faith, the mental part of it, is subjective; you can't see it. You can see the fruit of it. You can see the evidence of it. But you can't see trust. Baptism is an external marker of faith. It's tied together—not because of what I'm suggesting, but because God has put them together, and called them together...explained them together. When I talk about being saved by faith, I'm not excluding baptism. I don't believe that biblical faith exists without baptism.'

"At this point in the lecture, I discuss faith, repentance, confession, and baptism as two movements of our faith response to God's grace. One movement is internal (faith, or, more precisely, trust and repentance) and it is subjective by nature; and one is external (confession and baptism) and objective by nature. I use my own conversion experience as an illustration of this two part response of faith. This is where I make the statement that __________ has paraphrased and wrested from its context. I say,

"'I'm saved by ***faith.*** I'm not saved because I "got baptized"; I'd been dunked in water before. And if I thought that dunking people in water—immersing them in water—was sufficient, my goodness, we'd be out here dragging them off the streets and putting them in the water. It's not sufficient.

"'And if I thought that just saying that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.... I'd said that before, but I wasn't saved. Those two things come together, though, as an external mark of the faith that I had in the work of Jesus at the cross. It's not my work, it's his work.'

"Paul, I hope that this puts your mind at rest concerning my attitude toward baptism. I do not believe that anyone can carefully and honestly listen to my lecture in its entirety and come away with the idea that I do not believe that baptism is essential to salvation.

"Regarding your other questions, I submit the following 'brief' responses:

"1. *What must a person do to be saved?* Understanding that one is lost in sin and cannot save oneself, and understanding that God has acted to pay the price of salvation (Rom. 3:19–26), so that salvation is only available by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8,9), one must by faith (or, in faith) turn from sin in repentance and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38).

"2. *Is singing the only scriptural music in worship?* Yes, singing is the only scripturally authorized music in New Testament worship (1 Cor. 14:26).

"3. *Is the church of Christ, the one we read about in the Bible, the only one?* Yes, 'churches of Christ' (Rom. 16:16) is a way to refer to the *one* church established by Jesus that is described and discussed in the New Testament. Jesus has only one church and all saved people are added to it.

"4. *Are there Christians in the denominations, such as Baptist, Methodist, etc.?* Yes, there are Christians in denominations, insofar as there are people who have responded by faith to the gospel, and who, therefore, by virtue of their gospel obedience, have been added to the church by the Lord, but who, either through ignorance or in rebellion, have subsequently joined a denomination. I believe that anyone who believes in Jesus and His atoning sacrifice, who turns from sin in repentance, and who is baptized for the forgiveness of sins, is a Christian, regardless of who does the preaching or the baptizing. When one is saved the Lord adds him to the church (Acts 2:47). In that sense, all saved people are in the church of Christ. However, it is also possible to join a denomination, either through ignorance, or in rebellion. God is not happy with either. I believe the restoration slogan, 'Christians only, but not the only Christians.' I understand the restoration plea to be a call for all Christians to unite as one, abandoning denominational names, creeds, and unscriptural practices, so that the Lord's prayer in John 17 for the unity of all believers might be realized. Remaining in a denominational church against God's will is, in my opinion, to fail to 'walk in the light' (1 John 1:7) and that puts one's soul in jeopardy.

"5. *Have you changed from teaching the same doctrine your dad taught when you were a boy in Union?* I teach the same truth I have always taught, and I believe it is consistent with the truth my dad taught when he preached in Union. Certainly, I understand that truth better now than I did twenty or thirty years ago. I have changed my mind about some matters as a result of learning the Scriptures better. But regarding issues of salvation and the nature of the church, I still believe and teach what I have always believed and taught regarding these matters. However, I am convinced that, as a people, we have fought the doctrine of salvation by faith only to the point that we have left the impression with many in the pews that we earn our salvation by what we do. Most of my early preaching was against denominationalism, even though I never had very many denominationalists to hear me. I believe that it is possible to oppose false doctrine to the point of becoming unbalanced in our teaching. For instance, we can deny salvation by faith only to the point that we *appear* to teach salvation by works of merit. I think that has happened on a practical level, and I am determined to teach the truth from as balanced a perspective as I can.

"6. *Do you believe that Phoebe wrote a book of the New Testament?* ________ *thinks you do.* No. I do not believe that Phoebe wrote a book of the New Testament. I believe that sister Phoebe, a servant (**diakonon**) of the church in Cenchreae (Rom. 16:1), was probably the one who delivered Paul's letter to the Roman church. That accounts for Paul's commendation of her and his request that she be appropriately received (Rom. 16:2). I also hold as a personal opinion that Phoebe should be considered a deaconess, though I do not press that point. If she were a deaconess, she would still be forbidden 'to teach or to have authority over a man' (1 Tim. 2:12). I have taught that some scholars have suggested that Priscilla may have written Hebrews, but I do not consider that very likely. Actually, I consider it improbable, and virtually impossible. However, since I don't know who wrote Hebrews, when I teach it (especially on the college level), I try to present the various options for authorship that have been suggested by reputable scholars, along with an appraisal of those options.

"Paul, I hope that my answers to your questions are not too long (I am trying to be less long-winded), and, further, I hope that you can, in good faith, continue to defend me as a faithful preacher of the gospel. I am grateful for the influence that you and Clara have had on my life and the encouragement you have been to me over the years. At the same time, I know that you understand that my first allegiance must always be to the Lord Jesus and to the teaching of Scripture. If you have a problem with any of my answers, please let me know, and show me the way of the Lord more perfectly. I want to believe right, and to do right."

Conclusion

I take comfort in Peter's exhortation: "Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is right? But even if you do suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence; and keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are abused, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing right, if that should be God's will than for doing wrong" (1 Pet. 3:13–17). It is interesting to me that this is the context in which Peter says that baptism saves. Notice the context, "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit; in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him" (1 Pet. 3:18–22). According to Peter, there is a correspondence between the salvation of Noah and his family in the ark and our salvation. The ark was the external mark of Noah's faith. The water through which he was saved was incidental to his salvation, it was really by grace through faith. "By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, took heed and constructed an ark for the saving of his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness which comes by faith" (Heb. 11:7). And so it is that water is incidental to our salvation. It is not the physical act of baptism that saves—that's what Peter means when he declares that baptism saves but "not as a removal of dirt from body"; but it is baptism as faith—"an appeal to God for a clear conscience"—rooted in "the resurrection of Jesus Christ" that saves.

This episode has taught me the importance of taking care how I express myself. But I hope that it will encourage others to follow the admonition of our Lord and to not only "Take heed what you hear" (Mark 4:24), but also to "Take heed then how you hear" (Luke 8:18).

Associate Editorial

Bible Study Helps, No. 6

By Jim Mullican

CERTAIN PEOPLE HAVE A TALENT for seeing in ordinary events more than most of us see. A few even have the talent to put these insights into words and publish them. The results are books which inspire us to strive harder to live the Christian life, and which also help us to remember some important spiritual lessons. In addition, they have a unique way of making enjoyable the learning of such spiritual lessons.

Devotional & Inspirational Books

Many devotional and inspirational books can be found in any religious bookstore. Some are of little use to those who desire sound biblical teaching, but others are very good. This article will focus only on two prolific writers among our brethren.

One of the most successful writers of this type in recent years has been Max Lucado, who preaches for the Oak Hills Church of Christ in San Antonio, Texas. He is also a former missionary to Brazil. Over the last decade, he has written almost a book per year, and each one is tremendous. His latest, entitled, **He Still Moves Stones**, provides help for dealing with the burdens of life. These books make wonderful gifts, but you'll want to get a copy for yourself, too. Because these books are so good, they are probably bought by many more people outside the churches of Christ than within, and this has resulted in his being invited to speak on some programs sponsored by those with whom we disagree on some points. For this he has been criticized, and whether or not I would have participated I cannot say, since I do not try to monitor the activities of others. However, I do not have to endorse everything a man does to say that his books are excellent, and those by Max Lucado are.

Another brother who has written numerous inspirational books is Leroy Brownlow. His writings include such titles as **Better Than Medicine** and **Making the Most of Life from A to Z**. They are uplifting and encouraging books, and some of them would be helpful to teachers and preachers in providing lesson material and illustrations.

Picture Books

No, these are not books for children too young to read. They are books which will enable the Bible student to visualize many of the places and events described in the Bible.

A fairly inexpensive volume covering the Old Testament is entitled **Abraham and David: Places They Knew**, and is compiled by the highly respected F. F. Bruce. It contains beautiful color photographs of the modern sites of Biblical events, along with archaeological remains, jewelry, and modern people who live much the same way their ancestors did thousands of years ago. There is also a helpful text by Bruce which provides background information about each site. A companion volume on the New Testament is entitled **Jesus and Paul: Places They Knew**, and it provides the same treatment for New Testament sites.

Another similar pair of books is entitled **The New Testament in Living Pictures** and **The Old Testament in Living Pictures**, both by David S. Alexander. The fact that Scripture texts are taken from the **Living Bible–Paraphrased** does not render these books any less valuable. Both contain beautiful color photography of Biblical places and archaeological finds, along with brief explanations.

A fifth book, mentioned in an earlier article, is entitled **The Ancient Near East in Pictures**, by James B. Pritchard. It consists of black and white photographs of various archaeological artifacts relating to the Bible, and although very interesting and helpful, it is also quite expensive, selling for around $70.00. Either of the two sets mentioned above would probably be a more practical investment for most people.

This article concludes the series on Bible Study Helps. Contact Jim at RR 4, Box 30-A, Clyde, NC 28721.

The Caring People of the Caring Lord

By Dennis Conner*

IN MATTHEW 25:31-46 JESUS DEscribes the scene of the Great Day. The world stands at the threshold of eternity and the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory. The promise to return has been kept and the divine winnowing begins. It is Judgment Day and Christ divides the saved from the unsaved (the sheep from the goats) with unerring precision. Be sure to note the basis upon which eternal destinies will be decided. In this text, at least, it will not be on the amount of correct doctrine one espouses or on which side of certain issues one lands. Before you take pen in hand to correct what you think I said, I did not say doctrine is not important. However, it is more than just a bit interesting to note that in this context Jesus says nothing about doctrine as the standard by which we will be judged. Rather, judgment will be on the basis of how we have responded to the needs of hurting people.

The sweet words of eternal bliss, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world..." will be heard by those who have acted to meet the needs of the broken world around them. Jesus says, "I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me." The Son of Man identifies with the hurting, the needy, and the down trodden. Significantly, He calls them all "My brethren," revealing His kinship with all humanity. As Joe Barnett correctly observes, "Jesus does not confront me as an impersonal historical figure, but in the unsettling personal form of a hungry, thirsty, lonely, cold, sick, imprisoned here-in-front-of-me human being," ("The 'Issue' Is..." *Gospel Advocate*, January 1991, p.18). Thus, those who have a heart for human need have a heart for Christ, as well as the heart of Christ.

The operative word here is "compassion." It is constantly said of Jesus in the gospels, as He viewed the hurting masses, "and He had compassion on them." Correctness without compassion is Pharasaism at its coldest and worst. Correctness minus caring is a sure-fire formula for eternal condemnation.

In Matthew 25:31-46 it is clear that the people of Christ are to be a caring people. We cannot afford to close our eyes to the pain and brokenness of the sin-sick society in which we live. We cannot turn our heads and pass comfortably and self-righteously by on the other side and still claim to be Christ's church. Individually and corporately, the people of Jesus are to be a caring people.

In past years we have seen remarkable displays of our capacity to care.

The church responded impressively to the needs of Christians and others in Poland. We did something about famine relief in Ethiopia. Hurricanes, floods, earthquakes and fires in various parts of our nation have provided opportunities for great outpourings of care and compassion. Yet, as remarkable as responses to all of these tragedies have been, it has been easy for most of us just to send money, or to send someone else. However, along with this long distance approach, Jesus calls each of us to meet people where they are, to meet them in the daily routine of survival, to encounter them in their fallenness, and to love them in spite of what they have done with their lives. Jesus calls us to care.

The theme of this issue of **Carolina Christian** is "A Caring Church." The three theme

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articles describe efforts of caring Christians and churches to meet the needs of a hurting society with the heart and gospel of Christ. There has been the tendency of some in the past to equate any concern for social ills with the espousing of a "social gospel." However, such criticisms reveal an ignorance of what the social gospel of the early to mid 1900's was all about. The proponents of the social gospel generally were liberal in their theology, denying the supernatural elements of Scripture. They saw the work of the church as relieving human suffering rather than seeking and saving the lost. They were not concerned with biblical concepts of sin and redemption. As you will see in the articles in this issue, however, these Christians and churches view the hurting people in the society around them as victims of sin and see the cross of Christ as the only answer. To them the gospel is not the message that wrongs can be righted and society improved; rather, it is the good news that sin-slain souls can be reborn through Jesus Christ. For them, the ills of our society provide an opportunity to share Christ with people who need Him.

We commend these Christians and churches for their willingness to care. May we all be inspired by their example to dare to be a caring people.

May we dare to have the heart of Christ.

**Guest Editor. Dennis serves the church in Yadkinville, NC. Contact him at RR 6 Box 697, Yadkinville, NC 27055.*

A Caring Church

The Prison Ministry at FCI Butner

By Steve Tuten and Robert Floyd

IN 1978, THE COLE MILL ROAD CONgregation, in Durham, received a request for a weekly communion service from an inmate at FCI (Federal Correctional Institute) Butner who was a member of the Lord's church from the Washington, D.C. area. From this simple beginning with one inmate, the prison ministry at Butner, which houses about 800 inmates, evolved into a weekly worship service as other inmates began attending (we currently average between 15 and 18 attendance).

Since the FCI did not have any facilities large enough to hold water for baptisms, we were allowed to donate a baptistery/communion table. Since that time, dozens of inmates have been immersed into Christ. On one memorable Sunday this year, 10 were baptized in one day.

A Federal Prison Camp, housing about 300 inmates, opened next to the FCI in October, 1991. The Lord answered our prayers and opened a door there in March, 1994, when we were invited to conduct services at the camp. The following month, we were asked to take responsibility for conducting all Protestant services at the FCI and the camp for two and a half months while a new chaplain was in the process of being transferred in. Clearly, God has richly blessed our efforts here.

Why Are We Here?

When one thinks about prison ministries, the first Scripture that comes to mind is Matthew 25:36b, "I was in prison, and you came to me." Certainly, our initial entry into Butner was made on this basis. However, we view the prison work in light of John 4:35, "Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest?' Behold, I say to you, life up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!" For the Cole Mill Road congregation, FCI Butner is as much a mission field as are the UNC and Duke campuses.

In the eyes of the world, the men at the FCI are criminals, worse than those on the outside. To Christians, striving to "know no man after the flesh" (2 Cor. 5:15), they are sinners, just like everyone else, and in need of the gospel message, just like everyone else. If we truly believe that sin is sin, there is no difference between the inmate at Butner and the covetous idolater sitting in the pew on Sunday morning.

Both need the healing touch of God. One knows so; the other doesn't.

Like a college campus or a military base, the FCI gathers together men from across the country and around the world. After spending time here, they return to their homes. By the grace of God, some have returned with Christ in their hearts and the good news on their lips. Several of the men who became disciples of Christ in Butner have returned to their communities to become active workers in their local congregations. One is serving the Lord in his homeland of Colombia.

Why are we here? How could we not be? The Lord has opened a door and shown us a need. Dare we refuse His offering?

What Have We Learned?

First, we have learned *the importance of teaching the Bible*. At Butner we are known as "the people with the Bibles." From the beginning of the ministry, we have made Bibles available at no charge to any inmate who requests one. To date, we have given away literally hundreds of Bibles. Each year we budget (and spend) at least $500 on Bibles for the prison. Our willingness to give them to inmates with no strings attached and free of charge stands in marked contrast with the policy of other religious groups operating inside and outside the prison. It has served as a testimony of our sincerity among the inmates and the chaplains.

Equally as important, we use the Bible as our sole teaching tool. We believe the most important thing an inmate (or anyone else) can do to learn about God is to study His teachings. This is why we have distributed one translation (the New King James): to provide a focus for individual and group study. In our teaching, we do not use lesson books or pamphlets. While we do no condemn the use of these, we have found that the inmates, with time available for study, focus in on their Bibles and learn much on their own. We are amazed at the depth of study exhibited by the questions we are asked.

Second, we have learned *the importance of teaching Jesus*.With a number of religious organizations involved at Butner, we are often asked about the teachings of these groups. We have a firm policy of not attacking other groups by name; rather, we open our Bibles and discuss the specific teachings that are mentioned. We are allowed one hour per week to conduct services, so we do not have time to get into "doubtful." Instead, we emphasize the life and teachings of Jesus and the true doctrine of God as revealed in His word. While we try to base our lessons on the needs and questions of the men at Butner, we make sure they always focus on the solutions and answers offered by God.

> ***"...dozens of inmates have been immersed into Christ. On one memorable Sunday this year, 10 were baptized in one day."***

Third, we have learned *what is really important*. We have been allotted one hour for services each Sunday. Since the men must be back in their units 15 minutes after our service ends, we do not have the luxury of a separate Bible study and worship service. Therefore, we have combined the two. After a time of singing, prayer and celebrating the Lord's Supper, we have a lesson which is structured like a Bible study. Once a month we have a more "structured" service with a formal sermon. We find this to be in keeping with the spirit and letter of 1 Corinthians 12-14.

We also have no "invitation," *per se*. Instead, at the end of each service we ask if there are any specific prayer requests. Given the time constraints, and given the lack of a clear scriptural example, we do not feel particularly unhappy at the lack of an invitation. In fact, in every case of which we are aware, the men who have been baptized have requested it. We don't push them into the water; we teach about baptism, encourage them to study, and we wait for God to give the increase. So far, He has been faithful. This has greatly strengthened our faith in the power of God and His word.

Conclusion

In reflecting on what we have written, it occurs to us that we haven't conveyed how different and unusual prison work is. One might think that proclaiming the good news in a federal prison is no different than doing so in a "normal" community. In fact, that is the case. Whether in prison or on the streets or in the slums or in the divorce court or in suburbia or in a church building, people have the same spiritual needs. While our methods may vary, our message does not, because the people do not. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost, wherever they may be found. May God give us the courage and the wisdom to follow His example.

Robert Floyd and Steve Tuten are deacons in the Cole Mill Road church. Contact them at 1617 Cole Mill Road, Durham, NC.

A Caring Church

The "Untouchables"

By Forrest Boozer, Doug Lively, and Bill Stuart

HOMELESS PEOPLE: EVERYWHERE we turn we see them, on the roadside, in the park, at the mall or near the grocery store. We see them; then again we don't. Faceless, nameless people who just won't go away. Seeing them disturbs us, moves us to disgust, and sometimes to pity. More often than not, we simply choose to ignore them with icy indifference. What do we do about them? Why are they here? Is there a solution? Do we really have any responsibility toward them? What does the Bible teach?

The Scriptures provide us with a solid basis for an outreach to the homeless. The Old Testament is full of admonitions such as: "*He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done"* (Prov 19:17, NIV). True religion is not how many times we say Amen! Nor how much better than others we appear. All our prayers and deeds mean nothing to God, if we neglect the weightier matters such as helping the poor (Isa. 58:1-11). Jesus gave us an example of how we should treat the homeless and poor. Throughout His ministry He touched the untouchable, cared for the sick, fed the poor, and traveled as one *"with nowhere to lay His head"* (Luke 9:58). His instructions and parables teach us to be concerned about others (Matt. 25:31-46). We are to be that "Good" Samaritan to those around us in need of help.

Thus, if we follow Jesus' example of personal involvement, we must reach out not only to those like ourselves, but also to the "untouchables" of our society. We should never forget that our mission is to evangelize the world (Mark 16:16), and the streets are part of that world.

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The Eldership at the Brooks Avenue church has supported and encouraged congregational participation in outreaches to the needy for many years. As a result, our congregation has been involved in many of these efforts. Several of these endeavors have been aimed toward assisting the homeless.

Two years ago we opened our facilities on Thursday evenings to provide hot meals, GED classes, life skills, and Bible study to people living in some of the nearby shelters. Many of the members of Brooks and surrounding congregations volunteered to assist in this effort. With this work we were able to establish solid contacts with a few homeless people. However, because of the reluctance of the homeless to come to the building, this venture required far more volunteers than the number of homeless served. Yet, this work was successful as a stepping stone by getting members of our congregation comfortable with meeting the homeless in a familiar environment.

To foster more relationships with the homeless, several of our members began working in the shelters. Although many of Raleigh's shelters are staffed by other religious organizations, we discovered that very few of those volunteers ever got to know the people they were serving. So we made it our mission to build personal relationships with many of the men who stayed there. This outreach was successful, but we had difficulty getting volunteers who could regularly go to the shelter. To be effective, workers needed to be there at least once a week to keep up with the rapidly changing lives of those on the street.

These previous efforts provided us with the training and momentum necessary to minister to the homeless on the streets. In our current ministry we are preparing meals on Sunday evenings and taking these out to the avenues and parks of Raleigh. While on the streets we not only dispense the meal but also talk with those who come to eat. We have one-on-one prayer and Bible study, as well as group songs and prayer. We simply take Christ into the streets just as the early Christians did over 2,000 years ago.

Even though we have prayer on the street, we do not try to "beat 'em over the head with religion" like they say many other groups have done. Instead, we look for those who would be interested in coming to church or going to a Bible study. We remain friendly and concerned whether or not a person attends our services. This really drives some of them nuts. They cannot figure out what we are up to; if we are not there to shove religion down their throats, then we must be there to feel good about ourselves. One of them once asked a volunteer, "I bet you get a really good feeling from doing this, don't you?" He responded with, "If all I wanted was a good feeling, I wouldn't be out here!" He then went on to explain that we were honestly trying to meet needs and not there to feel good about ourselves.

> ***"One of them once asked a volunteer, 'I bet you get a really good feeling from doing this, don't you?' He responded with, 'If all I wanted was a good feeling, I wouldn't be out here!' He then went on to explain that we were honestly trying to meet needs and not there to feel good about ourselves."***

Over the past ten months, since we began our current outreach, the Lord has taught us many things that have made us more effective. The result has provided us with a growing ministry marked by spiritual growth and cooperation among those serving as volunteers. Some of our lessons were learned from mistakes, others from taking advantage of an opportunity given to us by God. Here are some of the lessons we have learned as a product of this work:

Prepare yourself for what you will find then make the most of the opportunities provided by God. *"Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed"* (Prov 15:22, NIV).

We must prepare ourselves spiritually, intellectually and socially for the task we're undertaking. Prayer is an extremely important part of our spiritual preparation, we need it constantly not only for those contacted by our ministry, but for ourselves in seeking wisdom, guidance, strength, and patience. In our outreach at Brooks, we readied ourselves intellectually in several areas: discovering community resources and how to use them, understanding the effects of alcohol and drug addiction, and working with the addicted. Also, we began preparing ourselves to work with the Hispanic population by offering Spanish classes on Sunday afternoons. Social preparation has come through building relationships with the other volunteers in the ministry who can sympathize with the problems we encounter and give encouragement when needed.

The most important preparation we can make with the homeless ministry is to be prepared to act. Consider James 2:15-18, which teaches that our words and intentions are meaningless unless we back them up with action. The homeless come in contact with many people who offer them both words of encouragement and scorn. Action, even to the extent of being sacrificial, is what differentiates Christians from "do-gooders" who often perform a small act of kindness out of convenience.

For example, on one occasion we found a young man suffering from a severe asthma attack who had a prescription for medicine but no money and no way to get to a pharmacy. One of our volunteers took action, carrying him to the pharmacy and purchasing his prescription. That same night we found a woman who had been sexually assaulted and had escaped her assailant but still felt vulnerable in the park. We called a nearby shelter and got her a place to stay. As a result of these actions word spread among the homeless and our credibility as a caring group was heightened.

Satan's hold is strong. Many of those we meet are alcoholics or crack addicts. It is truly pitiful to see firsthand the grip that drugs, especially crack, take on people's lives. You see many people who hate their lives because of the drugs, but feel powerless to change. These people lie, steal, cheat, and prostitute themselves to supply their cravings. Some reach out to us for help knowing they need Christ and to be off drugs. We can help them to find Christ, but helping someone off drugs is not for amateurs. If addicts are not willing to rearrange their lives around seeking professional drug treatment, then they will not beat their addiction.

A second area where Satan's hold is strong is in the area of "false teachers." There are many religious groups who are reaching out and trying to teach these people. In our area, Pentecostal congregations have very large outreaches on Sundays. They come in buses on Sunday mornings and take the needy to breakfast then to worship. The message they receive is lively and emotionally charged, but they are seated as a group and not allowed to mingle with the members of the church. After services, they are given a bag lunch and put on a bus to return to the street. It leaves many emotionally and spiritually empty. Because of these false teachings, when they try to turn to Christ they do not know how to reach him.

It takes the work of many people performing different tasks for a ministry of this nature to succeed. Truly, the Body is made of many parts working for the whole. There is a place for everyone in this ministry, including the youth. Our youth called and visited every household in our congregation to collect food and clothing. One of our youth is currently renovating a large room in the basement of our office building to be used for sorting and organizing the large volumes of clothes donated for distribution to the needy of Raleigh. This winter we took our youth group downtown on a Saturday afternoon to distribute toiletries to the homeless who were waiting in the cold for the shelters to open.

Women have a large part in this outreach (as in almost anything the Lord's body attempts). Not only are they vital to the organization, collection and preparation of the food, but with the homeless themselves. At first we were apprehensive about taking females with us to the street. However, we soon saw that women added a balance to our ministry that we were lacking. One of our lady street volunteers is a feisty woman who pushes men twice her size around like a drill sergeant. The men on the street love her and do as she says. Another one of our effective women has never gone out on the street with us. However, she comes to the building every Sunday afternoon at 3:30 to start preparing the food. She is special in a number of ways. First, she is "solid as a rock" in her commitment to Christ and the outreach, and she gives heartfelt encouragement to all our volunteers. Most importantly, however, when the homeless visit the services of our congregation she is sure to speak to them. When speaking to the homeless her conviction comes through and she encourages them to begin considering spiritual matters.

Be prepared to nurture the homeless once they become Christians. Unlike the Ethiopian Eunuch we cannot expect homeless people to go on their way rejoicing once they have been immersed. Rather, as brothers and sisters, we must be prepared to bring them up in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord." They are no longer "homeless" for they have found a spiritual home in Christ, and are thus members of the Body.

We have had four conversions since we started this outreach. Of those that have obeyed the gospel, only one has remained. We must remember the parable of the sower. The seed falls in many places and not all of it will bear fruit. But for those who do bear fruit, we must nurture and protect them with a loving congregation. Our faithful brother is challenging us with his love and commitment to Jesus. He shows all of us what the "Good News" really can do.

Homeless people: everywhere we turn we see them, on the roadside, in the park, at the mall or near the grocery store. When we see them, we know their problems, hopes and dreams. They are no longer faceless or nameless, rather they are our friends—hopefully one day our brothers and sisters in Christ. Seeing them moves us to act in their lives. When they are ready we will be there to help them.

For more information contact the authors at Brooks Avenue Church of Christ, 700 Brooks Avenue, Raleigh, NC 27607.

A Caring Church

Picking Up the Pieces After Divorce

By Pat Daggett

AS DIFFICULT AS IT IS FOR CHRIStians today to face, separation and divorce are realities that touch the lives of people around us—family members, co-workers, neighbors, friends. According to the most recent published statistics, for every 100 marriages in North Carolina there are 69 divorces, a rate somewhat higher than the national average. Therefore, the potential for members of the Body to be affected in some way by divorce is regrettably high.

At the same time, those people who are working through the aftermath of a divorce often find it difficult to continue to participate in the life of the church, especially in a congregation they attended as a married person. Regardless of the circumstances which resulted in the divorce, they may struggle with the perceived view that all divorce is "sin," or may feel guilty within themselves whether the church condemns them or not. And because church activities, particularly fellowship activities, are very family-oriented, single parents or children caught up in divorce situations may be made to feel different, and even excluded, as if they don't really belong in church. Some will turn away because they cannot find the comfort and understanding they need as they try to cope with their situation, feeling instead only loneliness and rejection.

As caring Christians, we have an opportunity and a responsibility to minister to people who are going through this kind of traumatic period (Gal. 6:10), and to help them to move beyond the pain and get on with their lives in a meaningful way. This article describes the basis for such a ministry and details how one congregation has been able to provide needed support, not only to its own members, but to the community at large.

Throughout the New Testament we are instructed to look out for the emotional well-being, as well as the spiritual well-being, of those around us. We are admonished to "mourn with those who mourn" (Rom. 12:15), and to "carry each other's burdens" (Gal. 6:2) "so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God" (2 Cor. 2:3–4). Divorce is an intense personal crisis, in many ways full of the same pain and emotional reaction that occurs with the death of a loved one. But while we have accepted and ritualized ways of dealing with the inevitability of death, our responses to the pain of a divorced person are often judgmental and unfeeling, and instead of helping the situation, we often make it worse. Recognizing the spiritual vulnerability of people affected by divorce, congregations of the churches of Christ are increasingly reaching out to provide comfort by sponsoring divorce recovery support groups. The concept behind a support group is quite simple: a support group is a group that meets for the purpose of encouragement, healing and acceptance. It is usually composed of individuals who are brought together by common life experiences and who are willing to share their feelings about those experiences in order to grow beyond them.

The Divorce Recovery ministry has as its primary goal "to exemplify the caring spirit of Christianity by providing a needed service to the community."

About two years ago, in response to needs identified by several divorced parents at the Cole Mill Road church, we began a Sunday morning Bible Study oriented toward "Special Families," (i.e., those whose family situation did not reflect the perfect "Hallmark" family consisting of father, mother, and 2.5 children). The class was open to anyone. Our initial sessions were filled with adults who were divorced and single parents, those who had been recently widowed, those who were part of "blended" families with stepchildren, and those whose spouses were not Christians and thus were often at services alone. Led by two of the elders, the class spent several months studying both the different family situations found throughout the Scriptures (many of which paralleled the situations of members of the class) as well as the Scriptures which each of us thought reflected our personal situations and from which we could draw comfort and solace.

By sharing with each other not only the problems we were encountering, but how, with God's help, we were learning to accept and cope with them, we had, for all practical purposes, formed a support group of our own. We had grown much closer to brothers and sisters whom weeks before we barely knew, and were able to finally feel that we had a "place" in the church again. But more than that, our individual faiths were strengthened greatly by this experience as we practiced Paul's admonition in Galatians to "carry one another's burdens." The various elders who led our class discussions were also coming to recognize the special needs of the class members, to see that class members were forming a small community to meet each other's needs, and to observe the increased spirituality that class members were gaining through this mutual support experience.

At about the same time, our ministers became aware of a community outreach program for the divorced sponsored by the church in Fairfax, Virginia. They visited this congregation to observe its ministry first hand and to discuss the possibility of starting a similar effort at Cole Mill Road. Upon their return, they approached several of the divorced members of the Special Families class about sponsoring such a ministry. We invited two of the facilitators from Fairfax to Durham for a workshop/training session to get an idea of what might be involved, and the sort of commitment it would require. After much prayer and deliberation, and with the support of the elders and ministers of the congregation, we determined to begin a similar ministry in the greater Triangle area.

The *Divorce Recovery* ministry has as its primary goal "to exemplify the caring spirit of Christianity by providing a needed service to the community." Its program is extended to all interested participants, regardless of background or religious affiliation. For many participants, this is their first contact with the churches of Christ, and we do have information available for those who want to learn more. Some participants will be encouraged by the example and support of the Christians in the group and will want to become a part of the church family; for others, it is enough for them to benefit from the group itself.

The *Divorce Recovery Support Group* ministry at Cole Mill Road is based on the experiences and recommendations of the Fairfax group. Our group meets once a week at the church building. The sessions begin with a brief social period with light refreshments after which they separate into discussion groups facilitated by divorced members from the congregation. Free child care for children from ages 2–12 is provided on the premises and is led by a divorced member of the congregation; this service makes it possible for some single parents to attend who otherwise might not be able to do so, and it also provides a social outlet for the children themselves. The group leaders are often called upon to provide phone support for participants as their needs require it. The ministers of the congregation are available for private counseling, if desired. The program is open-ended; it recognizes that working through the issues associated with the pain of divorce is a complex task and something that cannot be accomplished in a 6–8 week program. Instead, the pace of the group discussions is driven by the needs of the group members themselves, using an approach which guides them through the stages necessary to recover from their personal loss.

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Of necessity, the primary involvement with such ministry must be carried by any divorced members of a congregation; they are the only ones with the personal experience to give them the insights and perspective needed to guide group discussions. But members of the congregation at large can support such a ministry in other ways. We rely on them for word-of-mouth advertising of the support group, and for posting brochures in appropriate locations. Members can also assist by providing fellowship opportunities for the group, particularly during holiday times when the pain of a disrupted family situation is most intense. This past December, some of the ladies in our congregation prepared a meal for the group, taking the time to decorate the fellowship hall in the spirit of the Christmas season. For many in the group, this was their only "family" holiday celebration, and by being "kind and compassionate" (Eph. 4:32), these ladies created a sense of belonging for group members that carried over far into the New Year.

Even if a congregation is not able to provide an organized support group ministry, there are still many things that can be done by the congregation to show its Christian love. The most immediate impact of divorce for many is in their altered financial circumstances. Women who may have stayed home to raise children are now confronted with the need to find a job to put food on the table. Often divorced people must give up their homes and move to less desirable neighborhoods or housing situations. Frequently, just meeting daily needs is an overwhelming task for the newly divorced. At Cole

Mill Road, we have had several occasions to extend the hand of benevolence by providing food from our food pantry or funds for financial emergencies. On other occasions, men of the congregation have provided the muscle and transportation to assist families who had to move. In other instances, we have provided meals to a family while the single parent was recovering from surgery.

In addition to such tangible forms of support, it is just as important to develop a sensitivity to the different family situations that may be represented in a congregation. A Mother's Day dinner where the men cook for their wives may sound like a good idea, but it is a painful reminder to the single parent of his/her singleness and it reinforces the feeling that he/she doesn't fit in any longer at the one place where they should be most welcome. A Bible school teacher needs to decide how best to handle an activity that would involve a child making a craft item for a parent who is no longer a factor in a child's life, or to handle the situation where one parent has re-married and the child may have both parents and step-parents to make crafts for. The idea here is to get to know all our families well enough that we can act appropriately and form a loving awareness without making anyone feel "different."

As individual Christians, we also have the opportunity to minister to the newly divorced. Just as we are able to extend the hand of sympathy to those experiencing a loss through death, so can we reach out to others in similar pain. One very important act of friendship is to simply listen, to let them talk about their loss and to validate their pain. On a more practical note, be aware of the stresses in the lives of single parents as they try to cope emotionally and financially with raising a family alone. Offer to fix dinner. Take the kids on a Saturday afternoon to give the single parent a break. Offer baby-sitting services so the parent can attend a church fellowship activity for adults but who couldn't afford to go otherwise.

In over half of the divorces in North Carolina, there are children under the age of 18 at home. Divorce is especially traumatic for young children, and studies have shown that children continue to feel the effects of divorce for as long as ten years afterwards. In one study, three out of five children felt rejected by at least one of their parents, and nearly all have experienced some disruption of their lives. Children particularly experience loneliness after a divorce; they may see one parent only infrequently, if at all, and the custodial parent is often too burdened with the stress of trying to keep the home together to provide all the comfort that a child may need. It is important for a child to also have a support system, often another adult to whom the child can turn and who is concerned for the child's well-being. Our responsibility here is clear (James 1:27).

There is an African proverb which states "the whole village raises a child." In the same way, a congregation as a whole has a responsibility for the physical and emotional well-being of all its children, particularly those growing up in single parent households. If we fail to meet a child's basic human needs and to make him feel a part of the church family, we may never have the opportunity to meet his spiritual needs, a situation with grave consequences (Matt. 18:5–6). As a companion program to the *Divorce Recovery Support Group*, Cole Mill Road has established a *Big Brother/Big Sister* program wherein interested adults are paired with children in single parent families. These Big Brothers and Big Sisters take a special interest in their assigned child, visiting them at home, arranging to do fun things with them, and generally just being a positive presence in their lives.

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But even without a formal program, individual Christians can reach out to these children. Get to know them and find out what things they are interested in. If a child plays on a Little League team, go to one of his games. If another likes the movies, invite her along the next time you take your own kids. Be alert for children's activities at church and offer transportation to a child whose parent is working and otherwise could not participate. Offer to help a child prepare a special surprise for his parent's birthday.

In our first year of this ministry, we have touched the lives of 35 adults, (10 of whom are members of the Body) and reached people not only in the cities of the Triangle area (Durham, Raleigh, Cary, Chapel Hill, and Hillsborough) but from Burlington to Oxford as well. The average attendance at group meetings each week is 12–15, and we gain a new member on the average of once a month. We are now recognized in the local mental health community and many of our new members are referred to the group by their counselor or psychiatrist. In the year since this outreach program started, four of the participants have visited our services on more than one occasion, and two are now attending on a regular basis. We have also had two participants, who, having gained a renewed sense of self-esteem and a better understanding of their situations by participating in group sessions, were able to reconcile with their partners.

But just as importantly, the congregation and the individual members involved in this work are also benefitting from this ministry. We are gaining an awareness of the different family situations of our members and are beginning to find ways to make everyone feel that they belong. We have also seen a group of Christians who two years ago were only peripherally involved in the life of the church, now taking a lead role in a needed ministry for which they are uniquely qualified. And we have experienced the joy that comes from extending "a cup of cold water" in the name of Christ and knowing that we can make a difference for the better in the lives of those around us.

For more information contact Pat Daggett at the Cole Mill Road Church of Christ, 1617 Cole Mill Road, Durham, NC 27705.

"Know Your Bible"

By Phil Kinzer

KNOW YOUR BIBLE WAS THE NAME of a Sunday Bible question and answer program when I was growing up in Nashville, Tennessee. It was hosted each week by Ira North, then minister of the Madison church. Folks would send in their favorite Bible questions to get answers from the four panelists. It was a time, it seemed, when many people were interested in understanding what Scripture taught.

Many of the great educational institutions of our land were founded for the expressed purpose of training its students to first and foremost know the Word of God. The following inscription is still on the main wall near the old iron gate that leads to the campus of Harvard University:

> *After God had carried us safe to New England and we had builded our houses, provided necessaries for our livelihood, reared convenient places for God's worship and settled the civil government, one of the next things we longed for and looked after was to advance learning and perpetuate it to posterity, dreading to leave an illiterate ministry to the churches when our present ministers lie in the dust.*

The oldest institution of higher learning in our nation, founded just sixteen years after the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, was established for the purpose of perpetuating an educated, well-trained body of men who would proclaim God's word with intelligence, conviction, and authority. A lot of history has passed since those words were etched out in 1636, but the need for people to know their Bibles has never been greater.

Don't ever take your copy of the Word of God for granted. Study it for yourself. Hold your own convictions. That is something that no one can ever take from you.

Phil Kinzer is the pulpit minister for the Providence Road church in Charlotte. Contact him at 4900 Providence Road, Charlotte, NC 28206.

Responding to Change

By Amos Allen

CHANGE IS IN THE AIR. TO SOME people it is like the smell of a favorite flower or perfume. It enlivens and invigorates the senses. To others, though, it is the same as pollen from a noxious weed.

How can one thing be welcomed by some and despised by others? It depends on your perspective. One person is uncomfortable and unhappy with the way things are now. When they sense that their situation may change they are excited and relieved. Another person is very comfortable with the way things were, but he or she perceives that changes are coming. That person might resist, longing for what was.

In our homes, schools, jobs, neighborhoods, and everywhere else, change occurs. We all learn to deal with it and adjust to it. Look at children. None of them are the same as they were last year, regardless of their age. Do you shop at the same store now that you did ten years ago? Do you know all of your neighbors like you did when you were growing up? Will you be driving the same car fifteen years from now? We see change and we change, whether we like it or despise it.

In the USA changes occur rapidly. Many we cannot even keep up with. While all changes are going on, we often try to find something that is stable. We want some things to remain the same while all these other things move. We want something to hold to while the world spins about us. Some people make their house, or family, or friends, or hobby, or church the anchor for their lives. As the storms of life rage we want our ship to be anchored.

That is a common desire in most people. I think it is part of our makeup as human beings. God created us to want stability, to want some things to stay the same. If that is true, each of us should find the most secure, the most stable anchor we can. May I make two suggestions here?

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First, God is the best anchor, the most sure "thing" any of us will ever know. He never changes. He always has been and always will be. Yesterday, today, tomorrow—the same. He can help us maintain our balance no matter how fast the world spins out of control. Any stormy change can be endured if God is the harbor we shelter in.

> *"Never will I leave you;*
> *Never will I forsake you."*
> *So we say with confidence,*
> *"The Lord is my helper;*
> *I will not be afraid.*
> *What can man do to me?"*

The second suggestion is this: any other anchor we choose to hold on to is an idol. The devil is subtle, always trying to seduce us with "harmless" diversions. Be alert. Anything or anybody that takes God's place is an idol. Some things and people are very important, but if they are given the job that God alone is qualified for we are headed for trouble. Families change, jobs change, neighborhoods change, churches change. The Father in heaven has not told us to put our confidence or hope in any of these. He gives us family, jobs, friends, and fellow Christians to help us. Those people and things are good. They are not God, though, and cannot save us from the world's problems.

No one wants all things to totally change all the time. There might be some people who accept no change in anything anytime. Between these extremes we will find that the church will slowly make some transitions. Whatever changes we accept, we will keep asking ourselves who God is and does He want.

In all things we want to effectively worship and represent our King. In all things, in all words, in all plans, in all places may God be glorified as we choose and allow Him to be our anchor.

Amos Allen preaches for the Meadowbrook church in Asheboro, NC. Contact him at 631 Meadowbrook Rd., Asheboro, NC 27203.

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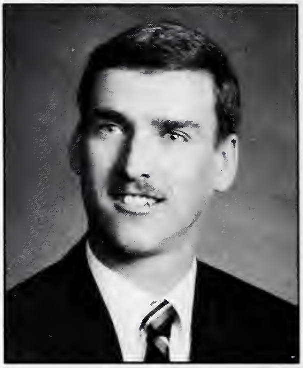

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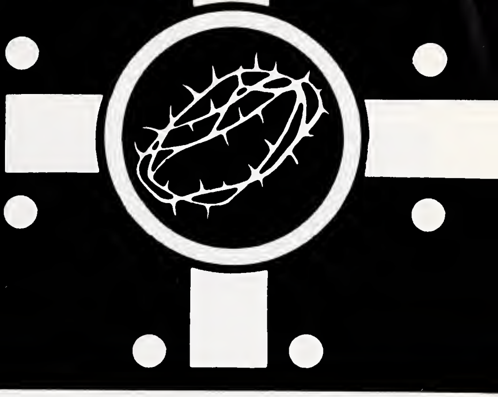

Studies in Exodus

Carolina Christian

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Studies in Exodus

By Paul Watson*

THE BOOK OF EXODUS WAS OF crucial importance to the faith and life of ancient Israel, and it remains so today for the Church. Children in the church grow up with its stories: Baby Moses in the bulrushes; Moses at the burning bush; the ten plagues; crossing the Sea; meeting God at Sinai; building the tabernacle. Mature Christians continue to be nurtured and sustained by its message: God delivers us from evil, and calls us to live in responsive obedience to Him.

In this issue you will find a thematic survey of the entire book followed by articles dealing with specific aspects of the book. *Amos Allen* elaborates the meaning of the Decalogue, then and now. *Don Giles* explores some aspects of the covenant, particularly as found in Exodus 24 and 34. *Bob Mason* calls attention to the unique significance of Passover. *Don Utley* uses the concept of the holy mountain, as found in both Exodus 19 and Hebrews 12, to challenge our thinking about the meaning of worship. All articles are written with one purpose in mind: That God's "name may be declared throughout all the earth" (Exod. 9:16).

Thematic Survey

The biblical material contained in the book of Exodus was of crucial significance to the life and faith of both ancient Israel and the early church; and it remains of critical importance for God's people today. Three of the five major themes of the Pentateuch (exodus from Egypt; journey through the wilderness; Sinai covenant) are centered in Exodus, while the other two themes (election of the "fathers" and inheritance of the land) are remembered (1:1–7; 2:24) and anticipated (3:7–8; 34:11–16) respectively. The first and arguably most important of Israel's three major religious feasts, the feast of Passover, is rooted in the exodus event. Israel's worship leaders (the Aaronic priesthood), her first worship center (the tabernacle), and instructions for her worship practices are all founded in the book of Exodus. Fundamental regulations governing both persons and property follow Israel's "constitution" (the "Ten Commandments") in Exodus 20–23. Moses, the central character of Exodus, is one of Israel's three greatest "heroes" (along with Abraham and David).

The remainder of the Old Testament frequently recalls material from Exodus (e.g. 2 Kings 23:21 and Psalm 106:6–12). The prophets repeatedly call Israel back to her covenant responsibilities (Hos. 4:1–3; Mic. 6:1–8). In the New Testament, after Psalms and Isaiah, Exodus is the most frequently quoted Old Testament book. Such passages as Matthew 15:4, Acts 7:17–44, and Hebrews 11:23–29 all depend directly on Exodus. Today the book of Exodus still provides rich resources for preaching and teaching, as illustrated by the fact that in the 1992 edition of **Best Sermons** (ed. James W. Cox), five of the forty sermons take a passage from Exodus as their text.

The "Story" Told by Exodus

With all these facts in mind, the question may still be asked, "Why is the book of Exodus so central to Israel's faith and to ours?" Simply put, the answer is, "Because of the story it tells." Deuteronomy 6:20-21 is instructive at this point: "When your son asks you in time to come, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the ordinances which the LORD our God has commanded you?' then you shall say to your son, 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand..." In other words, you don't know what to do, or why you do it, until you know who you are.

As children, and as adults, our very identity is shaped by the events of our own personal story, and the stories of our parents, grandparents, etc. before us. This is why Alex Haley's book and TV miniseries **Roots** was so enormously popular: It not only told Haley's story, but put us in touch with our own stories too. What is true for each of us in our respective human family is true for all of us in God's family also.

Walter Brueggemann puts it this way: "The retelling of the text is to remember who we are. That is why ancient Israel 'loved to tell the story' and why 'those who knew it best seemed hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest?'" (**Hope Within History**, p. 15). Michael Goldberg calls the Exodus from Egypt and Christ's passion and resurrection "master stories" for Jesus and Christians respectively. These stories "offer us both a model for understanding the world and a guide for acting in it." Goldberg adds, "master stories not only *inform* us, but more crucially, they *form* us." (**Jews and Christians: Getting Our Stories Straight**, p. 13).

For Christians, that "master story" is the Gospel, preserved in four accounts, each of which reaches its climax in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The "outcome" of this climactic event is recorded in the book of Acts, where the story is told over and over again by the apostles to a wide variety of audiences, many of whom yield themselves to it and become obedient to its demands.

So it is with the Exodus. Exodus 1–15 is for Israel what Mark 11–16; Matthew 21–28; Luke 19–24; John 12–24 are for the Church. As Genesis 12–50 summarizes the events leading up to the Exodus, so the prior material in each gospel brings us to Calvary. Then, Exodus 16–24 takes the people of Israel to Sinai, where God, through Moses, calls upon them to enter into covenant with Him. So Acts 1–2 takes us to Pentecost, where Peter presents God's commands for membership in the new covenant community: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins...."

From Sinai and from Pentecost the respective histories of Israel and the Church continue to unfold; but the basic story has now been told. And it is the same story (great difference in detail notwithstanding): God's gracious and mighty act for His people (Exodus and Calvary), leading to and calling for His people's respective acceptance of His offer of covenant with them (Sinai and Pentecost).

Deliverance (Exodus 1–15)

We turn now to a closer look at the three major sections of the book of Exodus, beginning with Exodus 1–15 and God's deliverance of Israel from the death grip of Pharaoh and Egypt. Chapters 1–2 describe the *changed circumstances* of Israel in Egypt that necessitate God's intervention. Chapter 1 begins with a summary introductory paragraph announcing "all is well" (1:1–7). However, God's plans for Israel (1:7) and Pharaoh's plans (1:8–10) are irreconcilable. Pharaoh's implementation of his plan is extremely oppressive (1:11–14, 22) yet not entirely successful (1:15–21; 2:1–10). Moses, a "natural leader" for Israel, emerges but is flawed (2:11–15) and finally absent (2:15–22). Chapter 2 thus ends with the heavy-hearted conclusion that "all is not well" (2:23–25).

The resulting *conflict* is told in chapters 3–11. Note that before God can deal with Pharaoh, He must first contend with Moses and Israel (3:1–6:27, reminiscent of Jesus' struggles with Peter and the other disciples)! Moses answers God's call with a series of four questions/objections, each of which God overcomes (3:1–4:31). Moses and Aaron's initial negotiations with Pharaoh backfire (5:1–14), dismaying Israel (5:15–21) and frustrating Moses (5:22–23) but not God (6:1). Instead, God reaffirms His intention to use Moses and Aaron to deliver Israel (6:2–27). Their initial skirmish with Pharaoh and his magicians is a draw (6:28–7:13). An extended conflict ensues in the form of nine "plagues," the cumulative effect of which is to bring Pharaoh almost to his knees, almost, but not quite (7:4–10:29). The dramatic announcement of a tenth plague is made (11:1–10), a plague which will show once and for all "That the LORD makes a distinction between the Egyptians and Israel" (11:7).

The conflict reaches its *climax* in chapters 12–15. Even before the final events take place, however, preparation is made for "remembering" them in the Passover (12:1–28 and 12:42–13:16; cf. the Lord's Supper / the new passover, eaten by Jesus with His disciples before and in anticipation of His betrayal / crucifixion / resurrection; Mark 14:12–26). Then "at midnight the LORD smote all the first born in the land of Egypt" (12:29) and Israel departed in haste (12:29–41, 50–51). Pharaoh's final change of heart ("What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" [14:5]) leads only to his being overwhelmed in the Sea. Israel, meanwhile, is told, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will work for you today" (14:13). They do; and God leads them through the Sea on dry ground (14:15–31). With the singing of a hymn of praise ("The Israelite National Anthem"), Israel's story of deliverance is complete (15:1–21).

Sustenance (Exodus 15–18)

Once Israel was beyond the borders of Egypt, one would think her difficulties were over. In many ways, however, they were just beginning. For a "wilderness" still lay between her and the land of Canaan. This was not a "desert" of sand dunes but a rugged, uninhabited region that was unable to sustain a settled population. And Israel had to get across it if she were finally to enter the Promised Land.

For this crossing Israel was ill-prepared. The people were leaving a known urban setting for this strange new hostile environment. They were more skilled at making bricks than at mastering a wilderness. They lacked both social organization (18:1–27) and military prowess (13:17–18; cf. 17:8–16). As T.E. Fretheim (**Exodus**, pp. 171-172) puts it, "The wilderness wanderings...were a surprise to Israel. Instead of a land of milk and honey, they get a desert.... Dancers and singers [15:20–21] are stopped dead in their tracks.... And the wilderness seems permanent. Forty years is a long time in the old sandbox.... The journey from the Red Sea to the promised land is littered with freshly dug graves, and not a single birth is recorded.... Bondage [in Egypt] with security and resources seems preferable to freedom and living from one oasis to another."

But that is precisely how Israel must live, for the next 40+ years. The story of how Israel gets through the wilderness, this "place betwixt and between" (Fretheim, p. 171), is begun in Exodus 15–18, continued in Numbers 10–36, and recalled in Deuteronomy 1–3 and 8–9. In Exodus 15–18, which takes Israel from Egypt to Sinai, five events are featured: undrinkable water made drinkable at Marah (15:22–27); manna and quail provided in the wilderness of Sin (16:1–3b); water from the rock at Massah/Meribah (17:1–7); attack of the Amelekites (17:8–16); and Moses' delegation of judicial responsibilities, as suggested by his father-in-law Jethro (18:1–27).

There are two threads which stitch together all the Wilderness stories, both in Exodus and in Numbers, and which are echoed later in both Old Testament and New Testament as well. The first theme is that of the providential care of God. Whether it is food or drink, military protection or physical healing, God provides it all. Both prophet (Hos. 2:14–15) and psalmist (Psalm 105:37–42) recall God's goodness to Israel in the wilderness. And God's manna is still available, if we turn to Him for it: "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11).

The second theme is a much darker one. It is the theme of Israel's perpetual discontent with God's graciousness, expressed in their constant "murmuring" (15:24, 16:2, etc.) Israel's memory of what life in Egypt was really like is deficient (16:3); her suspicions of God's true purpose in leading them into the wilderness are unfounded (Num. 14:3); and her trust in her leaders is minimal (Num. 16:1–50). So the wilderness is not only the place of God's total care for Israel but also the place where Israel first learned to mistrust God and disobey Him. Thus it was remembered by psalmist (Psalm 106:13–33), prophet (Ezek. 20:10-13), and apostle (1 Cor. 10:5–10) alike.

Covenant (Exodus 19–40)

The third and most extensive section of the book of Exodus deals with God's covenant with Israel. God has delivered the people from bondage: "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians" (19:4a). God has sustained the people in the wilderness and conveyed them to "the mountain": "You have seen...how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself" (19:4b). Now Israel is invited to enter into a permanent relationship with God, a relationship called "covenant": "Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (19:5–6a). Up to this point, God has acted unilaterally for Israel. Now, for the first time, a reciprocal response is demanded of Israel: "If you will 'hear,' if you will 'keep...'" (19:5a; 15:26 is, in fact, an anticipation of this moment). In other words, God has initiated this special relationship with Israel all on His own, by His gracious and mighty deeds. Now Israel must say whether or not that relationship will continue; a response from her is not only invited but demanded.

Note three other significant features in this crucial paragraph with which Exodus 19–40 begins: (a) By bringing Israel to "the mountain" (19:2), God has fulfilled His word to Moses when He first called him (3:12). God is Promise-maker and Promise-keeper. (b) God intends for Israel to belong to Him ("you shall be my own possession"). He will *not* belong to her / be her "possession" (as the second and third commands of the Decalogue will emphasize). (c) God has a purpose, a mission for Israel: "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation," mediating God's grace to all creation (recall Gen. 12:3b, "in you [Abraham] all the families of the earth shall be blessed"). That is still God's purpose for His people, as 1 Peter 1:14–16 and 2:5,9 affirm.

The crucial moment at Sinai is an awesome theophany ("God-appearance"; 19:1–25 and 20:18–21), wrapped around God's enunciation of His ten fundamental expectations for Israel (20:1–17). These ten "words," as the Hebrew text calls them (20:1), are the heart and soul of the covenant. All subsequent "statutes and ordinances" (Deut. 12:1) flow from them. These "ten words" are, in a sense, Israel's "constitution," defining her very existence as a people. They can also be understood as "boundary markers," staking out the extent and limits of the community.

Four further observations about the "Ten Words" are in order here. First, they are non-negotiable: "And God spoke all these words..." (20:1). Unlike other human agreements whose terms may be discussed by the parties involved, this is God's "take-it-or-leave-it" offer to Israel. He alone sets the conditions for the covenant.

Second, these terms are neither arbitrary, nor punitive, nor are they based on any abstract notions of "right" and "wrong." Instead, they reflect the very nature and character of the God who gives them: "I am the LORD your God...you shall have no other gods, shall not kill, etc." In other words, God is saying, "These conditions represent who I am and what I expect my family to be like." This is made very clear in the later "ordinances," e.g. giving a debtor back his cloak at sundown, for "if he cries to me, I will hear; for I am compassionate" (22:27).

Third, the movement is from the relationship of Israel, individually and collectively, with God to the relationship of members within the community one with another. Everything hinges on the first "word": "You shall have no other gods before me." It is not a philosophical question of whether other 'gods' exist or not, but the concrete demand of exclusivity: Yahweh God, and He alone, claims Israel's undivided, undiluted loyalty. Furthermore, Israel shall not try to manipulate or control Him, either visually ("word" #2) or verbally ("word" #3). She shall instead confirm God's purposes in and for creation by keeping His sabbath ("word" #4). Turning to the internal relations of the community, continuity of the people is to be assured by children "honoring" parents ("word" #5). The remaining five "words" protect, in order, a person's life, marriage, property, integrity, and general security. What a marvelous community in which to live!

Fourth, these "ten words" (except for #4 and #5) are expressed negatively: "You shall not...." Thus "they focus on the outer limits of conduct rather than specific behaviors...[their] primary concern is not to create the human community but to protect it from behaviors that have the potential of destroying it" (Fretheim, p. 221). At the same time, ample room is left for specifying positive behaviors that will enhance the well-being of the entire community, so that "the intent of the commandments is to engender love of God and love of neighbor" (B.S. Childs, **Exodus**, p. 439). And that, of course, is precisely how the whole "Law" is summarized: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deut. 6:5) and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev. 19:18).

After the awesome theophany is concluded (20:18–21), three other units of material follow. First, the first specific laws which begin to spell out the implications of the "Ten Words" are given in the "Covenant-code" (20:22–23:33); and the covenant is ratified in a solemn ceremony (24:1–18). Second, additional regulations pertaining to Israel's worship are spelled out (e.g. ark, tabernacle, priesthood; 25:1–31:17), only to have Israel break her covenant by worshipping a golden calf (31:18–32:35). Third, after the covenant is renewed (33:1–34:35), the tabernacle is built and the instructions of chapters 25–31 are carried out (35:1–40:33).

The final word of Exodus has to do with "the glory of the LORD" filling the tabernacle (40:34–38). This was in anticipation of the journey that still lay ahead for Israel. God would be with Israel on that journey without ever being "captured" by Israel. Thus is Christ with His church, "to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20).

**Guest Editor. Paul serves as pulpit minister and an elder for the Cole Mill Rd. Church of Christ, 1617 Cole Mill Rd. Durham, 27705.*

Studies in Exodus

The Ten Words

By Amos Allen

WHILE LIVING IN KENYA, EAST Africa, we found that driving was a challenge. The roads were poor, maintenance was occasional, and road signs were optional. We often discovered sharp curves, potholes and one-lane bridges to the sound of squealing brakes. Of particular surprise were new speed bumps where none had been last week and remained unmarked. We watched the road constantly because we never knew what lay ahead. We needed help.

In Exodus 19 the Israelites come to the mountain of God in the Sinai desert and camp there. They have the LORD afflict their cruel Egyptian taskmasters. God has delivered them from Pharaoh's army; given them water, meat and bread; and defeated the Amalekites. Now God wants to tell them what He has in mind: "[I]f you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples...and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (19:5,6).

God wants these people, and He wants to bless the whole world through them (Gen. 12:1–3). The picture of God in Exodus is of one who is passionately concerned about being known through the help He gives to this nation of malcontents. Egypt suffered overwhelming catastrophes due to its treatment of His people. God's patience with Moses and the people is extraordinary. God loves this homeless, undisciplined child with unbridled affection. What more can He do for them other than lead the way to Canaan? Chapter 20 has the answer.

The words found in Exodus 20 are based on who God is and what He knows about people. Israel is addressed at this time because God loves them. In verse two God starts the message with a reminder of the nature of their relationship: I saved you!

What we call the Ten Commandments have often been thought of as laws that take the fun out of life. In Hebrew, though, they recalled the Ten Words (with the idea of "instruction" rather than law). God loved the Israelites so much that He gave them this set of guidelines to insure their happiness and peace. When we view them as edicts hurled like spears to pin people motionless to the wall, we have missed the heart of God.

God knew that the children of Israel did not know how to live. Help was needed. They would be slaves forever until they learned that true freedom is a matter of the heart. The Ten Words would free them to enjoy Him and their new home. When they knew the keys to successful living, real freedom would be theirs.

These words still free us to enjoy God and trust His way for us. At times I need to communicate very clearly with my children about how to behave. I try to reassure them that any rules I give them come from my knowledge combined with my love. I try to impress on them that the limits I set are for their safety and well-being. If we view God's rules for living as suffocating straitjackets, we will avoid them. When we realize how gracious God is to share His knowledge of how to live, we will embrace the principles presented in the Ten Words.

In Exodus 20:2 God identifies Himself in the introduction to the Ten Words: The Deliverer. The relationship has already begun and Israel needs to know appropriate ways to respond to her Savior. Salvation occurs first and then the covenant is offered. The idea of the covenant with its rules was to insure Israel's continued salvation and prosperity (Deut. 5:28-33).

Below, we want to briefly look at the ten foundation stones for building a life in harmony with God.

#1 No Other Gods

In Egypt there were lots of gods dealing with many aspects of life. Israel would be tempted to seek help while in the desert and as they entered Canaan. God said, "I am enough for you."

God is #1; to live contrary to this truth insures disaster. Giving priority to pleasure, possessions and positions is deadly (1 John 2:15–17).

Legend has it that Cortez, the Spanish explorer, burned all of his own boats after he and his small army landed in Mexico in 1519. The message heard by the men was, "My way or no way."

To deny God control of our lives gives room to gods that will destroy us. God's desire to be #1 is for our benefit.

#2 No Images

God is spirit and wanted Israel to worship Him accordingly. The temptation was to "capture" God in an image so the people could get a handle on who He was. He would be easier to know if He would stand still and allow Himself to be approached. Israel wanted a user friendly deity.

Images are lifeless and one dimensional. God refused to let Israel settle on one view of Him. He is alive and untamed by our perceptions. God is prohibiting unworthy and inadequate images that would hinder their worship of Him.

Jesus is God's picture of Himself (Heb. 1:3). When God wanted to be more fully known, He came as a person; and He was very pleased with the impression He left with us (Luke 3:22).

#3 No Misuse of My Name

God's name is important to Him because it expresses who He is. God shared His name with the children of Israel so they would know something of His greatness (Exod. 3:13–15). God did not want them to use it in a meaningless way or with evil intentions.

God is holy; using His name takes us onto holy ground. His name is to be praised because it belongs to God. "Let them praise thy great and terrible name! Holy is He!" (Psalm 99:3).

Profanity occurs when we use holy words in unholy ways. His name is majestic, and all of us should carefully use it.

#4 Keep the Sabbath Holy

Three reasons are given for stopping one day a week: (1) rest, (2) compassion, and (3) remembrance. Resting reminded them that God was the provider; it was not their hard work that brought prosperity. Compassion was to be shown to people and animals by giving them a day off. Two things were to be remembered on the Sabbath day: God is creator and redeemer (Exod. 20:11; Deut. 5:15). This day was a gift from God to help the Israelites get their lives back in focus by remembering what was important: loving God and people.

For Christians, the day of remembering is Sunday. The early church met to worship and encourage each other by focusing on God's action of creating and redeeming a new people. Just as the Hebrews were known for their day of stopping, we are known as people who stop to reacquaint ourselves with reality by looking to God.

#5 Honor Your Parents

God established order and authority in the home with these words. Families are the building blocks for a nation. These families needed to know God and produce respectful and obedient members of society. Homes without order would create chaos for the whole nation. This command also insures that care be given to the elderly.

Jesus found that people were not honoring their parents in His day (Mark 7:9–13). It resulted in children ignoring the welfare of their aging parents. Paul reminded children to be obedient to their parents (Col. 3:20). It appears to be a word we never stop needing to hear. An identifying mark of a Christian is that we care for and honor our parents.

The Grimm brothers told a story of an aged grandfather living with his son's family. The daughter-in-law despised the untidiness of the patriarch when he ate, for his hands shook badly. Eventually, he was put in a corner to eat out of a trough so he wouldn't make such a mess at the dining table.

One day the young grandson was working in the yard with some old lumber and tools. His father asked what he was making. The boy replied, "a trough for you and mama when you grow old." The man's father rejoined them at the table that very night.

#6 No Murder

God had expressed to Cain and Noah that He does not accept the malicious and uncontrolled killing of another person (Gen. 4; 9).

Jesus, in Matthew 5:21–26, explained in more detail the thoughts of our Father. When we lose control and allow destructive words or actions to come from us, we have sinned. Few of us consider ourselves murderers. We might want to consider God's views.

#7 No Adultery

Adultery is the breaking of a covenant that was original with God (Gen. 2:24). If adultery were allowed, homes would be nonfunctional. Society in general would fall apart because families, without love and trust, would cease to exist.

We are familiar with Jesus' insight on this rule for living, found in Matthew 5:27,28. Just like murder, it can occur in the mind and be sin.

We need to understand what God knows about adultery and fornication. Something about it offends Him and causes great damage. When obeyed in its fullest sense, this rule becomes the blessing it was meant to be. When disobeyed, life is miserable (2 Sam. 11). When we see adultery promoted as a way of life and are told it is healthy and harmless, we are being lied to.

#8 No Stealing

God knew people would want things and there are basically two ways to get them: work or steal. Stealing was showing disrespect to God who had given the item and to the victims who had worked to obtain it. The Lord was concerned with the welfare of every person. He established other laws that guarded against poverty (Lev. 25). Stealing comes in many forms. We all should guard against taking what we have not earned or been given.

#9 Tell the Truth

It is agreed that God was interested in justice with this command. Telling lies against other members of the community would undermine the whole judicial process. The implications, though, extended to every aspect of life.

Lying is common these days and thus skepticism is greater. Do any of us believe our government leaders these days? Does anyone believe you? Jesus closely associated lying with Satan and told us to be honest people (John 8:44; Matt. 5:37). One of the distinguishing qualities of God is His truthfulness. He is as far from lying as the east is from the west.

#10 No Coveting

This sin is closely tied to the admonition not to steal. What the neighbor has belongs to him and to greatly desire it is sin. Wanting his possessions can lead to theft. Interestingly, this rule leads back to the first command to have no other gods.

Coveting distorts perspective, which opens the door for idolatry. When something you want becomes the object of your attention and energy, you have made it an idol. Abraham Lincoln was once asked why his two sons were crying. He answered that he had three walnuts and they both wanted two of them. Walnuts are not much of an idol, but neither are the other things we live for. If what you want is not of God, it is not good.

It has been said we cannot break the Ten Words, but we break ourselves violating them. They stand as truths to be lived. Going against them hurts us and ultimately creates chaos.

The snares and traps of Satan are on every path we take. Any relationship is subject to attack by him. Our devotion to God is always in danger of being misdirected. And God knew this. Therefore He went around marking where Satan had dug and camouflaged the pits designed to swallow us. These markers were called the Ten Words by the nation of Israel.

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Studies in Exodus

Covenant in Exodus

By Don Giles

IF ONE WANTED TO SUM UP THE heart and soul of the book of Exodus in one word, that word would almost certainly be covenant. It is the most important and most dominant concept of the book. Everything in Exodus can be said to involve preparation for the covenant, stipulation of the conditions of the covenant, or Israel's response to the covenant. Even the all important law, as vital as it was to the Hebrew system, follows from the covenant. Without the covenant, the law is like the proverbial building without a foundation.

While Exodus makes passing mention of God's covenant with the Patriarchs, the focus is directed toward the national covenant between God and Israel beginning in chapter 19. It is there that we find the Israelites entering the desert of Sinai, three months after their exodus from Egypt. When they came to Mount Sinai they stopped and camped before the mountain. When Moses went before the Lord, God offered him a monumental proposal to give the people: "You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod. 19:4–6). It was an unprecedented proposition, Yahweh Himself was offering to enter into a covenant relationship with a whole nation.

The notion of covenant was not a new or unfamiliar one to the Israelites. As noted before, God had made covenant with individuals in the past (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). It was also found among men, both between individuals and on a national level (for example, ancient Hittite treaties were often of a covenant nature between ruler and subjects). It was now proposed on a national level not between a human ruler and his subjects, but between Almighty God the people He chose to be His "called out."

In verse 5, there is a small word that tells us a great deal. The word is "if," "if you obey me fully and keep my covenant...." The first thing that it tells us is that the Israelites had a choice. God had reminded them of what He had done for them in bringing them out of Egypt: "I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself." Now the delivered had options to consider. Would she spurn the gift of freedom that God had given and return to the bondage of Egypt as some Israelites thought would be the "safe" move? Would she accept the deliverance, but reject the deliverer? Or would she accept the gracious offer of God and pledge her loyalty to Him. That not so little "if" would indicate that they could have chosen one of those options. God was willing to dictate the terms of the covenant, but He did not want to compel allegiance—that would have to be by choice.

The second thing that "if" tells us was just alluded to, the "if" tells us that there were conditions involved in the covenant. There is an "if...then" relationship expressed, "*if* you obey me and keep my covenant, *then* out of all nations you will be my treasured possession." Yes, the people had the choice to follow or not follow, but they could not make their own conditions. God Himself would stipulate how they should follow in the form of the law that begins here in Exodus. This is why I say that without the covenant the law is like the building without a foundation.

In response to God's offer of a covenant relationship, the people declared, "We will do everything the Lord has said." God then gave the people special instructions in how to consecrate and prepare themselves for His return three days later to initiate the covenant. On that day God came, accompanied by thunder and lightening and the sound of a very loud trumpet; a thick cloud of smoke enveloped the mountain and God came upon Mount Sinai in fire. In the midst of this awesome spectacle, God calls Moses to the top of the mountain. God invites

Moses to bring Aaron up on the holy mountain with him, but reminds him of the warning that no others should come upon the mountain to see the Lord lest they perish. Then God begins to utter the words of the covenant, beginning with the Ten Commandments, the Decalogue. After the people saw and heard this they were afraid and implored Moses to ask God not to speak directly to them, but to speak through Moses to them and they would listen. So the people kept their distance and Moses when back into the smoke to receive the word and bring it back to them.

From 20:22 until the end of chapter 23, God continues to expound upon the provisions of the covenant, the law. Above I have compared the law without the covenant to a building with no foundation, this is not to diminish the importance of the law, law is the logical consequence of the covenant. Whatever role "law" eventually came to take in Jewish society, it had a definite purpose originally. In our society, as in most ancient societies, "law" is designed to regulate and control. When the Israelites first received the law, they would have understood a different intent. The Hebrew word **torah** (law) means to lead or show the way or to give direction or instruction. The law that Yahweh gave His people was to be a tutor to teach the Israelites how to follow God. Just as a foundation alone is not a complete building, so the covenant without the law would be incomplete. In the same way that a structure with no foundation will quickly fall, the law without the covenant would quickly cease to function. There is no "which came first, the chicken or the egg?" type of issue here, the primacy of the covenant is clear both in the text and in reason. The covenant and the law are, however, inexorably linked. The covenant represents the initial commitment, the goal, the "what." The law gives the covenant direction, the "how"; the covenant gave the law context, the "why." In other words, they justify each other; once the covenant was made and had given birth to the law, either one of the two should lead back to the other. The law showed the people how to live up to the condition of the covenant, "If you will obey me fully...." The covenant would always be there to remind the people why they followed the law. (Indeed, that would become their problem; for many Jews the law eventually became an end in itself, divorced from the covenant that gave it purpose.)

Returning now to the narrative, it is in chapter 24 that the covenant is confirmed. Moses relays the words of God to the Israelites and the people repeat their pledge, "Everything the Lord has said we will do." The next morning Moses and the people seal the covenant in blood, Moses sprinkles half the blood of the sacrifice on the people and the other half upon the altar. After sealing the covenant, Moses goes back up the mountain to continue receiving instructions from the Lord.

As most people are aware, it did not take the people long to err in keeping the covenant. In fact, before Moses returned from the mountain the people would be straying, necessitating Moses' intercession before the Lord on Israel's behalf. They had not even left Sinai before Israel had already demonstrated her weakness and unfaithfulness. Fortunately for them, God was gracious in renewing the covenant (chapter 34). Unfortunately, it was the beginning of a heritage of falling away and return.

In working with young people, I frequently hear questions about why we should study the Old Testament. "If we are New Testament Christians, what relevance is the Old Testament?" "If Christ took away the old covenant and replaced it with a new one, why study the old?" The truth is that it is not simply our young people that struggle with this issue. Whether stated or not, many of us have relegated the stories of the Old Testament to the level of bed-time reading for the children. That is not to say that reading these stories to our children is

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not appropriate, it most certainly is! The problem lies in the fact that all too often the Old Testament is left behind with Hanzel and Gretel. Nothing in Scripture is fairy tale. You ask if the Old Testament matters to us. I ask you to examine the text discussed above. It is the paradigm for all discussion of covenant, old or new, in the Bible. It demonstrates countless truths about the eternal nature of our Lord God: His desire then as now to have a covenant relationship with His people, His intent that such a relationship be by choice, and His willingness to take back His erring children. We can find guidance for dealing with many of the issues that divide our brotherhood today; look at the relationship between the covenant and law in the light of our constant debates of the relationship of grace and works. The covenant of Exodus is not only Old Testament foundation, it is foundation for all who seek God.

Don Giles is youth minister for the Cole Mill Rd. church in Durham, NC.

Studies in Exodus

The Feast of Passover

By Bob Mason

WE SOMETIMES GET A LITTLE BIT World Series and Final Four obsessed. The Super Bowl is the game of the century, played every year. In terms of Jewish worship, this would be the Passover Feast.

As the first feast established and most important, respect came not by age or tradition. Rather, the commemoration of the Hebrew people leaving Egypt marked the birth of the nation of Israel. John refers to this oldest and greatest of the feasts in the years of our Lord's public ministry (John 2:13; 6:4; 13:1–2).

The departure of the Hebrews from Egypt was anything but neat. After nine terrible plagues, the tenth would cause Pharaoh to send Moses and the Hebrews out of Egyptian bondage. God announces the terror of the tenth plague: death to the firstborn in the land of Egypt. The eldest child of Pharaoh, of the maidservant behind the mill, and of the cattle would be struck dead (Exod. 11:4–6). However, He assures that no harm would come to man, beast, or dog of Israel, to show that the Lord makes a distinction between Egyptians and Israel (Exod. 11:7). This distinction, obvious in previous plagues, assured that the powers of God might not be mistaken for just chance (Exod. 9:7).

Then God gives instructions to the Hebrew people for preparation for His visit of death upon the Egyptians. A total new beginning requires a new calendar. The year would now be counted from the month of the Passover feast (our April), rather than starting in the fall (Exod. 12:1).

The special agent of the Passover is the blood of a lamb (Exod. 3–13). God will recognize the blood of the lamb applied to the doorposts and lintel, and will pass over that house. The Egyptians will have no such protection from the plague of death.

Severe tragedy in one home, and God's divine protection of the other, was the emotion of the Passover. Several specific instructions guided the preparation and serving of the Passover lamb. It was to be a year old, unblemished, taken out of the herd on the 10th and kept for the household until the 14th of the month. Then all the lambs would be killed. A 4-H project often ends in tears, because in a year an animal can become loved as family. Likewise, these Passover lambs must portray the essence of innocence. How curious the roasting of the animal, with head, legs, and entrails (Exod. 12:9), until we remember the Lamb of God hanging on the cross.

"These things took place that the scripture might be fulfilled, 'Not a bone of him shall be broken'" (John 19:36). The bitter herbs and unleavened bread (Exod. 12:8) foretell the bitter-sweet flavor of hardships and freedom in the Exodus from Egypt. Each household (family) prepared a lamb, but smaller families would join together to consume the whole animal. This is good preparation for difficult times, when the nation would have to depend on more than themselves.

Jesus advanced this idea further: the whole church has the same Father, making all of us family. And as some families were too small for their own lamb, we will always have those in the church that can not stand alone as a unit. Families far from "home," broken families, and singles will find in the church that access to the feast, much like that joining to share a lamb.

The curious manner of eating this first passover feast was related to the atmosphere of the departure. With loins girded, sandals on their feet, and staff in hand they would eat the lamb in haste (Exod. 12:11). The picture is readiness, vigilance, and diligence. Say the word and they are ready. You think of Nehemiah's men working on the walls with sword in one hand, and tool in the other. You think of the moral and religious decay of our day, and want to say, "Here I am Lord, send me!" Picture us with the tools of our trade in one hand and our Bible in the other! Picture us this ready to launch out.

The Passover was not the first sacrifice. Offerings, as a gift (**minchah**), go back to Cain and Abel (Gen. 4:3), and burnt offerings (**owlah**) go back to Noah (Gen. 8:20). Sacrifices (**zebach**), involving the killing of an animal, go back to Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 22:7). Jacob's case was the combination of "offered sacrifices." (Offering of that which was killed, [Gen. 31:54].)

However, this Passover lamb introduced atonement by its blood. The Israelite could see that salvation was because of the blood of the lamb, and not his own good deeds or perfect keeping of the Law. Imagine the impact when the Hebrews could see the blood of the lamb stand between them and certain death! In reality, the blood by itself was not the strength; but the grace and mercy of God gave life to His people and showed His strength. Blood on the door of an Egyptian house would not have helped, because God was bringing judgment on their gods! (Exod. 12:12). Some of the first-born of the cattle and the Pharaoh were to be worshipped. But more than that, the gods were the protection of the people, and the most precious and dear in their home was struck dead by the God of the Hebrews. A severe blow struck both people and Egyptian gods.

In the Gospels, we see the ultimate fulfillment of the Passover when "the lamb of God" sheds His blood of on the cross. No other gods or deeds will prevail against our God and Father in Heaven. Our strength or purity will not deliver us, and no other god can save us. By the grace of God our sins are forgiven.

The departure out of Egypt marked not only a physical move from Egypt to the land promised to Abraham. It also called Israel spiritually, out of the world and its heathen worship, to be God's chosen and covenant people. As feet walked away from old homes, hearts walked away from heathen practices. God was first and supreme, and Passover celebrated this total renewal.

Bob Mason, Church of Christ, 307 High St. Aberdeen NC 28315.

Studies in Exodus

Mountain Survival

By Don Utley

"ON THE MORNING OF THE third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.

"The LORD descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up and the LORD said to him, 'Go down and warn the people so they do

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not force their way through to see the LORD and many of them perish. Even the priests, who approach the LORD, must consecrate themselves, or the LORD will break out against them.' Moses said to the LORD, 'The people cannot come up Mount Sinai, because you yourself warned us, "Put limits around the mountain and set it apart as holy."' The LORD replied, 'Go down and bring Aaron up with you. But the priests and the people must not force their way through to come up to the LORD, or he will break out against them.' So Moses went down to the people and told them" (Exod. 19:16–25).

During the last years of the Vietnam War, I served in the Army Band in Washington D.C. The greater portion of my time was spent helping to provide military music for the "Full Honor" funerals at Arlington Cemetery. Contributing to the services held for the men and women who died for our country was meaningful to me, but at the end of a service I was often left with a profound emptiness. I remember being struck by the silence of the proceedings, interrupted only by the brassy military music and the sudden percussive salute of the Honor Guard's rifles. Of all the scores of funerals in which I served, there were three whose silence haunts me even today. Each was held in stereotypical weather (rainy and bitter cold) but these were not typical funerals. You see, these three services had no mourners: no family of the deceased, no friends, not even tourists. For reasons unknown to any of us who took part in the funerals, we were holding a solemn ceremony in honor of a fallen soldier, only for the fallen soldier. I remember the comments and questions among some of my colleagues: "Why are we doing this? Why would the military want to go through with such a meaningless service? What a trivial waste of time!" But I also recall the thoughts of others: The fact that no one was there to mourn did not matter. Were family members and friends of the deceased unable to travel? Was this soldier the last in the family line? It did not matter. These funerals were the expression of a nation's desire to honor those who sacrificed themselves on her behalf, even if that honor were witnessed only by an anonymous handful of fellow soldiers. We were compelled to see beyond the moment—to grasp something that is bigger than any of our individual experiences in a way which makes sense out of the nonsensical.

This morning, even as we speak, there are those who are worshipping as we are. They have sung hyms very much the way we have (they may have even sung the same hymns). Like us, they have honored Jesus by sharing the memorial meal, have prayed and studied together. But their worship is not identical to ours at all. For some are weeping as they worship. Instead of the hymns bringing them joy and comfort, they bring a reminder that many of their brothers and sisters are now in new situations, having left because of the very nature of the hymns being sung. In many churches across the nation, members are being forced to choose a side. Some say that our worship must contain nothing but contemporary Christian songs: "Those old songs are weather-worn and no longer speak to our era." Others have the opposite, but equally rigid, perspective: "I've grown up in the church and not only dislike much of the contemporary style of music sung in some churches, but I don't understand much of the thoughts contained in the songs. Many are downright unscriptural!" Back comes the retort: "Many of the songs are Scripture!" The debate goes on and churches feel the strain at their seams. Some members leave congregations out of discouragement; others stay, only to cope with discouragement of their own. To be fair, a great amount of the discussion goes further than simple musical taste. It has to do with a more fundamental question: What is the purpose of our worship? Some would say that the purpose of worship is simply to glorify God. The church identifies itself as it worships. The church certainly welcomes visitors into its midst, but it does not worship for the sake of visitors. Worship is not a performance meant to attract people to who we are. It is the people of God giving tribute to their God.

Others would argue differently: "The purpose of our worship service is to be evangelistic. Of course we do this to attract people. We should not only proclaim the gospel, but we should do it in a way that is 'visitor friendly.' That is why we don't sing time-worn, stodgy, classical, high church songs that are foreign to our 'audience.' The worship assembly is meant to bring people to Christ, and that will only happen if our worship is crafted with the visitor in mind." These considerations are not completely foreign to our congregation. Some of you are not pleased that we sing so many traditional hymns. Others of you would love it if we never sang a single "devotional" song. Some of you would argue that the church must be dynamic. Our world changes so readily, we must address it with a gospel which is not "boxed in" by static traditions. Others would contend that to allow the world to fashion any aspect of our faith—especially our worship—is to lose our unique identity and forfeit any credible message we might have. As I stood in rank with the soldiers at Arlington Cemetery, I felt challenged to embrace something that was larger than my singular perception. I suggest that as we come to this morning's text, it may also force us to appreciate something about worship that will not allow us to remain provincial as we consider how we best worship God.

This morning we have read a very stately passage from the book of Exodus. Though we have read from Chapter 19, the words propel us back to chapter 3, where Moses was first encountered by Yahweh. A bush on Mount Sinai was in flames, but was not consumed. This unique vision drew Moses closer, only to have God warn him, "You are on Holy ground. Remove the sandals from your feet. Do not come any closer." Moses would learn that God is so awesome and majestic and holy that He is not to be approached for fear of one's life. But he would learn more about Yahweh's nature. "Moses, I give you a mission. I have heard the groaning of my people because of their slavery in Egypt. You will be the one who will lead them out of Egypt. That will be your mission. And one day, you and my people will worship me on this mountain." And now as we come to chapter 19, we read that Moses was indeed again on Mount Sinai: "Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, 'This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: "You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.'"

The book of Exodus takes us on a journey during which we observe and experience the fulfillment of a promise of God. Not only did Yahweh bring the people out of the bondage in Egypt, but He brought them to a place where they would worship as participants in a wonderful covenant relationship with the powerful God who rescued them. And this morning we take one more trip through God's Word. This trip takes us into the book of Hebrews where we are told of a mountain much different than Mount Sinai.

Hebrews 12:18–24

The church that the Hebrew author addresses is one that should not have been far removed at all from an awareness of God's presence and His power. This church is reminded by the Hebrews author in the second chapter that God testified to the gospel in signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will (v. 4). The author would remind the church to "...remember those earlier days after you had received the light when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. You were publicly exposed to insult and persecution and at other times you stood side by side with those who were also treated like that. You sympathized with those in prison and you joyfully accepted the confiscation of your own property" (10:32–34). That was how the church had been in the past. But the Hebrews author knows that there's something crucial at stake in the church which now faced an insidious enemy. He would say to the church in chapter 2, "We must pay careful attention to what we have heard so that we don't drift away." He would say to the church, "See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God, but encourage one another today as long as is called Today so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly to the end the confidence that we had at first" (3:12–14). He would continue later, "Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing but let us encourage one another and all the more as you see the day approaching" (10:25). He would rebuke the church: "We have much to say about this but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. By this time you ought to be teachers but, no, you need someone to teach you the elementary truth of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food" (5:11-12). The Hebrews author challenged a church that was drifting away, toward mortal danger. The church addressed by the book of Hebrews had lost sight of something very important. The book of Proverbs states, "When there is no vision the people perish" (Prov. 29:18). The Hebrews author wanted the church to again flourish with the help of a wonderful vision: "You have not come to a mountain that can be touched. You haven't come to a mountain that is sensory, that is of this world, that is burning with fire to darkness in gloom in storm. But, instead you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, the spirit's of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel" (12:18-24).

Do you hear what this author is saying to that church and, by extension, to you and me? "While it is true that we worship an awesome and majestic God and that He is nothing if He is not holy, God has chosen to bring us to a mountain that is approachable." Because of Jesus Christ, who is our High Priest, we are given the opportunity of coming into His presence—when we pray, when we sing, and when we worship. How amazing!

So, what does that say about our worship together? How does this address our questions about how to worship, or what kind of songs we are supposed to sing? What is the purpose of our meeting here? Is worship only God-oriented? Or, is it aimed at the visitor? Are we to proclaim the gospel or are we to celebrate the gospel? What is it that we are here to do?

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Listen to one more passage from the pen of the Hebrews author. "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water" (10:19-24).

The issues surrounding our worship are no doubt crucial to many and are worthy of our careful consideration. But as we consider them, let us do so with proper perspective. The issues are meaningless if they are addressed in ways which turn blind eyes to what is truly happening when we come together as the body of Christ. Just as a funeral in the Arlington Cemetery cannot be fully appreciated by simply counting the number of mourners, worship cannot be reduced to issues which involve nothing more than personal taste. The church gathers each week to help each other see beyond themselves—even beyond the sky. We gather together as the people of God to be ushered by our faithful High Priest directly into the Holy of Holies, to be repeatedly awed and yet comforted, humbled yet empowered, rebuked yet forgiven. That vision will never allow us to perish.

Consider the words of William Blake, the 18th century English poet: "When the sun rises, do we not see simply a round disc of fire? Oh, no when the sun rises I see an innumerable company of the heavenly hosts crying; Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty."

You know what? If we make the decision to consciously come to this place every single Sunday to approach God confidently and to be sustained by His power, I don't think we are going to have to debate on what we sing, or how we sing it, or from what book or in what order. We are just going to be awestruck by the fact that God allows us to worship at all! That brand of worship will no doubt truly draw our guests to something unique and real. Where there is a vision that is big enough to do justice to our God, then questions will get their answers in due time. And the answers may just surprise us!

Don Utley delivered this sermon to the Cole Mill Rd Church of Christ, Durham, NC where he serves as the Associate Minister.

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

VOL. 36, NO. 8 AUGUST 1994

Amen!
Praise and glory
and wisdom and thanks
and honor and power
and strength be to our God
for ever and ever.
Amen!

Carolina Christian

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN
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Editorial

By Johnny R. Melton

"AND BESIDES THIS, GIVING ALL diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:5–8).

We hear a great deal about virtue these days, and its about time. Bill Bennett has edited a book which has been on the best seller list for months now, with over a million hardcover copies in print, entitled **The Book of Virtue**. The June 13 issue of *Newsweek* featured a cover story on "The Politics of Virtue: The Crusade Against America's Moral Decline."

The call for virtue is fueled by the degeneration of morality and basic civility throughout the nation. According to a *Newsweek* poll, "76 percent of adults agree that 'the United States is in moral and spiritual decline,' and crime and drug abuse rank far ahead of jobs and health care as national concerns."

Bennett's list of virtues includes responsibility, courage, compassion, loyalty, honesty, friendship, persistence, hard work, self-discipline, and faith. These traits are called the "essentials of good character." In his "Introduction" to **The Book of Virtue**, Bennett states his purpose for bringing these stories together, "This book is intended to aid in the time-honored task of the moral education of the young. Moral education—the training of heart and mind toward the good—involves many things. It involves rules and precepts—the dos and don'ts of life with others—as well as explicit instruction, exhortation, and training.

"Moral education must provide training in good habits. Aristotle wrote that good habits formed at youth make all the difference. And moral education must affirm the central importance of moral example. It has been said that there is nothing more influential, more determinant, in a child's life than the moral power of quiet example. For children to take morality seriously they must be in the presence of adults who take morality seriously. And with their own eyes they must see adults take morality seriously."

Bennett is absolutely correct. While it is important to talk about virtue and character, virtue is not instilled by talk, and character is not developed by mouthing platitudes. That is why the politics of virtue may not result in any real improvement in national behavior. How much credibility can be given to a campaign for character launched by Congress just days before one of its most influential leaders, Dan Rostenkowski, is handed a 17-count felony indictment for alleged crimes committed while in office? Especially for children, but for adults as well, the old adage rings true, "I can't hear what you are saying, because what you are doing is ringing so loudly in my ears."

The apostle Peter calls for action, not just talk. And Peter recognizes that the place to begin for improved character is with faith. While it is true that a minimal level of civility can be agreed on without Christian commitment, sin is real, and unless it is dealt with will continue to inveigh against the development of real character. Christianity begins with the redemptive work of Jesus, and only calls for one to give diligence in developing the Christian graces after being "purged from...old sins" (2 Pet. 1:9).

Virtue is "moral courage" and requires diligence, or hard work, to develop. But the proper place to begin is faith. Faith in God (Heb. 11:6); faith in Jesus (John 8:24); and faith in the gospel (Mark 16:15,16).

Church Directory

The **1994 Directory of Churches of Christ in the Carolinas** was mailed in June to those who had placed pre-publication orders. We are grateful for the patience that was shown as we missed our projected publication date by a couple of months. However, we believe that those who use the ***Directory*** will agree that it was worth the wait. Gratitude should be expressed to Jerry and Brenda Senn for the diligent effort they put forth in gathering the data and in mailing out the directories. As with any effort of this nature, our ***Directory*** is not without its shortcomings. There are inaccuracies in it; some of which are due to our editing mistakes, and some are due to preacher moves and/or changes churches make in time services. We would appreciate being notified of the mistakes that are found in the ***Directory***. We will print updates from time to time as corrections are sent to us.

Additonal copies of the ***Directory*** may be purchased at $3.00/copy. Send orders to: Carolina Christian; Jerry Senn, Managing Editor; 1975 Haywood Road; Hendersonville, NC 28739.

The Right Word

By Jim Albright

BIBLE TRANSLATION IS NOT SO easy as finding the equivalent for each word in the Greek text and writing it down. Literal translations of some expressions easily understood by English readers may come out as nonsense to tribesmen, or even express an opposite meaning from what the biblical writer intended.

Ray Elliott, translator to Guatemala's Ixil Indians, illustrates how he solved such a problem: "We learned early in the translation process that we could never be satisfied with a literal translation without careful checking to see whether the Ixiles understood the sense we knew should be conveyed. And it is good that we did. Take, for instance, the case of the 'hard hearted man.' In English this phrase is possibly an insult, certainly a derogatory statement, and one seldom spoken in the presence of the man referred to. In Ixil, the same phrase literally translated may be highly complimentary, spoken by a person of his friend, and in his friend's presence.

"The heart thus referred to in English is one whose hardness prevents the entrance of compassion. A hard Ixil heart, however, is one into which fear cannot enter. So while the words hard hearted in English deride one for lack of pity, the same expression compliments an Ixil man for courage. Thus in Mark 16:14, since Jesus was not commenting on the bravery of the eleven, we had to search for an expression in Ixil which would really carry the meaning of hardness of heart. Our search ended in the phrase 'calloused heart.' This makes use of the same word which refers to calluses on the feet of barefoot Indians and calluses from working with tools. When combined with 'heart' it means slow to understand or coldness of heart. This part of Mark 16:14 now reads: 'He scolded them because they did not believe and because their hearts were calloused.' "

The New Testament is in progress for the 53,000 Ixil in three different dialects. The three groups understand about 75% of the others' language. This is probably enough for the marketplace but not for learning eternal truths.

CARLA, short for Computer-Aided Related Language Adaptation, is a series of computer programs to help bridge the gap between dialects. CARLA helps translators produce a rough first draft in a related dialect. The computer speeds up much work but will never be able to replace the living example of Christ's love shown by the translators.

Pray that the Ixil people will discard their calloused, stony hearts and allow God to give them hearts of flesh.

Jim & Barbe Albright currently work at the Wycliffe-JAARS Center in Waxhaw, NC. They are available to tell more about Bible translation to your church or small group. Call (704) 843-2040.

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Respect For Authority

By James Meadows

OUR WORLD IS ONE OF MUCH CONfusion and great disturbance. Restlessness prevails on every hand. How does one explain it? Much, maybe all, of the confusion that prevails today is due to lack of respect for authority, or a failure to accept any standard of authority. The Catholic Church openly admits that she doesn't accept the Scriptures as an all-sufficient guide. "We must, therefore, conclude that the scriptures alone cannot be a sufficient guide and rule of faith because they cannot, at any time, be within the reach of every inquirer; because they are not of themselves clear and intelligible even in matters of highest importance, and because they do not contain all the truths necessary for salvation" (James C. Gibbons, **The Faith of Our Fathers**, New York: John Murphy, Co., 1:1, pp 89,90). Several years ago, Foy E. Wallace, Jr. wrote, "I have been convinced for a long time, that the fundamental error of the religious world today is the lack of respect of the word of God. The need of divine authority for what is done in the realm of religion is no longer recognized" (**Bulwarks of the Faith**, Oklahoma City: Foy E. Wallace, Jr., Publisher, 1951, p. 229). In all phases of life, especially in the field of religion, one must not only recognize a standard of authority, but the source of that authority, because it is the source that makes it authoritative.

What Is Authority and What Kinds Are There?

Authority is "the right to command and enforce obedience; the right to act by virtue of office, station, or relation; as, the authority of parent over child; authority of an officer" (Webster). "From the meaning of leave or permission, or liberty of doing as one pleases, it passed to that of the ability or strength with which one is endued, then to that of the power of authority, the right to exercise power..." (W.E. Vine, **Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words**, Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1962, p. 89).

There is primary authority which grows out of the relation of those who have the right to command and those whose duty it is to obey. God is the fountain of all primary authority whether it be in the civil or religious field. At Jesus' trial, Pilate said, "Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee." Jesus answered, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore, he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin" (John 19:10,11). We are the creatures of God's hand and the product of His intelligence. God has the absolute right to command because He is our Maker, Preserver, Bountiful Benefactor, etc. It is our absolute duty to obey.

There is delegated authority which can be given to another by the party holding primary authority. This is the right to command and enforce obedience. First, God delegated authority to His Son. Jesus prefaced the great commission with "all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). Jesus said the Father gave to "the Son to have life in Himself and hath given Him authority to execute judgment" (John 5:26,27). God "hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son..." (Heb. 1:2). Second, Christ delegated authority to the apostles. "Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 18:18; cf. Matt. 16:19). In His prayer to God, Jesus said, "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them..." (John 17:8). In order to avoid any mistake or error (because of the weaknesses and imperfections of the apostles) in receiving and communicating of God's will to man, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth (John 16:13; Acts 2:1–4). Third, the apostles are still administering the authority they received because they delegated it to no one. "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28). One that receives the apostles and their teachings receives the Lord. "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth Him that sent me" (Luke 10:16). "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth Him that sent me" (John 13:20). "Their teaching is Christ's teaching; their authority, is the authority of Jesus." The apostolic authority is in the words they spoke because these words have the authority of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the apostles in them.

Rebellion Against God's Appointed Arrangement Is Rebellion Against God

Moses and Aaron were appointed by God to lead Israel out of Egyptian bondage. In the wilderness, the people "murmured against Moses and Aaron" (Exod. 16:2). Moses told them "that the Lord heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord" (Exod. 16:8).

Numbers 16:1–7 records a great rebellion led by Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and two hundred fifty princes of Israel against the authority and position of Moses and Aaron. They were accused of taking too much upon themselves. Fire went out from the Lord and destroyed the accusers (Num. 16:31,32). "Here is a vivid Old Testament incident involving rebellion against God's delegated authority, and a clear illustration of what God thinks of such rebellion" (Roy Deaver). This is a clear, forceful and unforgettable demonstration of what God thinks of those who rebel against His delegated authority. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning..." (Rom. 15:4).

After Israel entered Canaan, they rebelled against God by rejecting Samuel, His appointed judge over Israel (1 Sam. 8:1). Israel said to Samuel, "Thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8:5). Samuel was displeased with their request but "the Lord said unto Samuel, Harken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me that I should not reign over them" (1 Sam. 8:7).

Respect for Authority in the Home

The home is a divine institution. "And the Lord God said, it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof: and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 21:18–24).

God has given laws regulating the conduct of every member of the family and He must be respected and obeyed. There was such respect in Abraham's house. "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him" (Gen. 18:19). Joshua's household respected God. "And if it seems evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15). Timothy grew up in a home where there was unfeigned faith in his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5).

The wife must respect the God-given authority of the husband in the home. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing" (Eph. 5:22–24). "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives.... For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement" (1 Pet. 3:1, 5–6).

Children are to respect the authority of their parents in the home. Disobedient children are abominable in God's sight. Under the law of Moses, a stubborn and rebellious son was stoned to death (Deut. 21:18–21). "Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother: and all the people shall say, Amen" (Deut. 27:16). Jesus said that one of the characteristics of the wicked days preceding the destruction of Jerusalem would be that "children shall rise up against their parents" (Mark 13:12). "Disobedient to parents" is found in one of the blackest catalogs of sins in the Bible (Rom. 1:30). "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right" (Eph. 6:1). There are a number of reasons why children should obey their parents, and why they will obey them if they respect the authority of God. First, it is commanded of God and always has been. "Ye shall fear every man, his mother, and his father, and keep my Sabbaths: I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 19:3). "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother" (Prov. 6:20). "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord" (Col. 3:20). Second, such obedience will be following the example of Christ. "And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but His mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:51,52). Third, "for this is right" (Eph. 6:1). Fourth, parents know more than children, therefore "a wise son heareth his father's instruction..." (Prov. 13:1).

Children are to honor their parents. "Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise" (Eph. 6:2). Honor includes obedience, but it includes far more. Honor also includes the idea of support when it is needed. Jesus told the Pharisees that they failed to honor their parents when they withheld needed support from them (Matt. 15:1–6). Luke records that when Paul and his company left the isle of Melita, the natives "honored us with many honors" (Acts 18:10). They gave them the necessary things to meet their needs on their journey. "To honor father and mother is to discharge faithfully the duties the child owes them—obedience in childhood, respect, reverence through life, tender care, and support in old age, and kindness and love at all times" (David Lipscomb, **A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles, "Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians,"** Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1952, Vol. IV, p 119).

Respect for Authority Toward the Government

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For his minister is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For, for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor" (Rom. 13:1–7). Several conclusions follow from these inspired words:

1. Civil Government is ordained of God. This does not mean that every government that happens to be in power is appointed or necessarily approved of God, but the "principle of government" is instituted by God. The fact that God ordains an institution does not mean that He approves every abuse of this institution. The home is God-ordained, but that doesn't mean that every home is "heaven made" or "God

approved" (Gen. 2:18–24). God ordained the church but He doesn't approve everything done by every congregation.

2. Civil government is ordained for vengeance.
3. Civil government is ordained for good.
4. Christians must be in subjection to Civil Government, not only for fear of punishment, but also for conscience' sake.

As Christians, we occupy the peculiar position of being citizens of two kingdoms at the same time, and we owe obedience to both. "Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way" (Matt. 22:15–22). We often face the problem of knowing our responsibility to each kingdom and having to decide how to be true to both. Decisions are often difficult because we act according to principle are not according to some specifically stated truth in every instance.

What does God expect us to render to the Civil Government? First, God expects us to render obedience. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers" (Rom. 13:1). "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well" (1 Pet. 2:13,14). Obedience to civil rulers will involve a readiness "to every good work" (Titus 3:1) required of us. The only time we have the right to refuse obedience to civil rulers is when such obedience requires action contrary to God's will. The three Hebrew children refused to obey Nebuchadnezzar's decree to bow before the golden image (Dan. 3:1–18). Daniel kept praying (Dan. 6:1–10). Peter and John said, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Obedience to civil rulers must be rendered because (a) they are ordained of God (Rom. 13:1); (b) their wrath comes on the disobedient (Rom. 13:4,5); (c) the Christian's conscience is involved (Rom. 13:5); and (d) it is for the Lord's sake (1 Pet. 2:13). Second, God expects us to honor civil rulers. "Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. honor the king" (1 Pet. 2:17). Third, we must offer prayer in behalf of vicious rulers. Judah, when in Babylonian captivity, was told "seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace" (Jer. 29:7). "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim. 2:1,2).

Respect for Authority in the Church

Elders are a part of God's plan for the organization of each local congregation (Phil. 1:1). On the return part of Paul's first missionary journey, he ordained elders in every church (Acts 14:23) and told Titus to "ordain elders in every city" (Titus 1:5).

Elders of the church do have some authority that all the members do not have. The following terms and their meanings clearly show this: (1) Overseer (**episcopos**), Acts 20:28—"overseer, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things done by others are done rightly." (2) Shepherd (**poimeen**), 1 Peter 5:2; Acts 20:28—"To feed, to tend a flock, keep sheep...to rule, govern, to furnish pasturage or food." (3) Watch (**gregoreo**), Acts 20:31—"To watch...give strict attention to, be cautious, active." (4) Set over; are over (**proistemi**), 1 Thessalonians 5:12—"To set or place before; to set over ... to be over, to superintend, preside over ... to be a protector or guardian; to give aid ... to rule, to care for, give attention to." (5) Submit, yield (**hupedio**), Hebrews 13:1—"To resist no longer, but to give way, yield ... to yield to authority and admonition, to submit"

(**Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon**, pp 243, 527, 539).

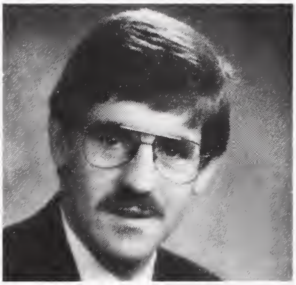
God's will definitely outlines our duties to the elders of the church. (1) We are to know the elders. "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you (1 Thess. 5:12). To know is "to recognize as having authority as distinct from something else." (2) We are to esteem the elders. "And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thess. 5:13). Webster says esteem means "to set a value on; appraise; to regard as; to appreciate the worth of; to hold in high regard; prize." (3) We are to honor the elders. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine" (1 Tim. 5:17). Honor means "esteem due or paid to worth; manifestation of respect; hence fame; credit; good name." It sometimes includes the idea of paying for work done or shared with one (cf. Acts 28:10; 1 Tim. 5:3). (4) "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses" (1 Tim. 5:19). (5) We must obey the elders. "Obey them that have the rule over you..." (Heb. 13:17). Submit means "to leave or commit to the discretion and judgment of another or others. To yield, resign, or surrender to power, authority" (Webster).

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir over all things, by whom also he made the worlds" (Heb. 1:1,2).

James Meadows preaches for the church in Boiling Springs, SC. Contact him at 225 Shoally Park Ct., Spartanburg, SC 29303.

Church Leadership Seminar

October 28–29, 1994



Dr. Earl Lavendar

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Resource Person:
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Nashville, Tennessee

Seminar Theme:
Worship in the
Church of God's Intent

Topics:
Friday, October 28
"What Is Worship?"

Saturday, October 29
"Paradigms of Worship"

"Planning for Spiritual and Numerical Growth through the Worship Assembly"

"Honoring Tradition, but Growing Toward the Image of Jesus Christ"

The program will begin at 7:30 P.M. on Friday, October 28 and it will conclude at 3:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 30. There will be a $25/person Registration fee.
(The fee covers overnight lodging for Friday, breakfast and lunch on Saturday, and handout materials for Seminar participants. Make checks to* Church Leadership Seminar*)

Being God's Mouthpiece

By Tim Sensing

“BRIEFLY THEN, THERE ARE three components of preaching: the message, the messenger, and the mess in which we are living; or, the Word, the witness, and the world” (Edward F. Markquart, **Quest For Better Preaching**).

Markquart earlier states, “It is the very nature of our God to communicate, and for the people to hear and respond.”

“If you diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord...” (Exod. 15:26).
“If you obey my voice and keep my covenant...” (Exod. 19:5).
“Out of heaven he let you hear his voice...” (Deut. 4:36).
“Who has heard the voice of the living God speaking..., as we have, and has still lived?” (Deut. 5:26).

In contrast, the prophets ridicule the heathen gods precisely because they are “dumb”; they cannot speak; they have no voice.

“For the workman trusts in his own creation when he makes dumb idols! Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, Awake; to a dumb stone, Arise! Can this thing give revelation? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in it” (Hab. 2:18-19).

The Hebrew word for prophet means, “spokesperson,” or “mouthpiece.” Even a casual glance at the prophetic writings demonstrates that the majority of their words deal with “proclamation” rather than “predictions.” The classical example of the term prophet is found when Moses complained about not being able to eloquently speak for God in Exodus 4:1, 10. God responded, “Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.... I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.... I will be with your mouth and with his [Aaron's] mouth and will teach you what you shall do” (Exod. 7:1; 4:12, 15).

Jesus, too, came preaching the good news and sent His disciples out to do the same. Seventy times in the New Testament we find the verb **euangelizomai**, which means “preaching the good news.” Voicing the good news; proclaiming the good news: that is what Jesus and His disciples were doing. Mark introduces Jesus' public ministry with the words, “Jesus came into Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons” (1:39).

God's very nature involves His communication of His will to us. He has spoken. Each time we tell someone else the message from God through Christ, God still speaks. Each of us has a personal responsibility to know the message and to be a messenger.

“We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us” (2 Cor. 5:20).

It is easy to proclaim God's message in friendly places. However, the world is in a dark mess and hostile to the light of good news. Through the messenger sharing the message, Markquart concludes, “God addresses us in our situation—our worry about nuclear holocaust, our abortions, our materialism, our deaths, our diseases, our divorces, our drugs, our despair, our boredom, our kids, our souls. Preaching is not only truth...; it is God's truth for us in our situation.”

Dr. Tim Sensing, Mebane Street Church of Christ, PO Box 1861, Burlington, NC 27216-1861.

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The Puritans and the Salem Witch Trials

By Robert Curry

IN JUNE 1692 SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS sat in judgment of six women who had committed acts of witchcraft. All were hanged on a rocky hill west of town. Of course, there was no doubt that the deeds of witches were afoot in Salem. The daughter of the local preacher was in a trance and muttering hideous sounds, and her cousin was crawling around on the floor barking like a dog. A cow had died unexpectedly; children screamed as if pinched; fevers came and went. No one doubted the advent of the Devil himself into the fair village of Salem.

There was also little doubt as to whom was responsible for these unfortunate occurrences within the village. Bridget Bishop had been married three times, wore a red bodice, and entertained all those young people at the local inn. Old Sarah Good smoked a pipe, begged from house to house, and anyone turning her away soon faced all sorts of troubles.

"...does anyone understand why in one...summer [Salem] filled its jails, turned a bucolic knoll into 'Gallows Hill,' hanged 19 people, tortured another to death and then, only four years later, hung its head in shame?"

One historian asks the obvious question: "...does anyone understand why in one...summer [Salem] filled its jails, turned a bucolic knoll into 'Gallows Hill,' hanged 19 people, tortured another to death and then, only four years later, hung its head in shame?" (Watson, Bruce. "Salem's Dark Hour: Did the Devil Make Them Do It?" *Smithsonian* [April, 1992] 117–130).

Of course, a complete understanding of the events is impossible. Our modern society, far removed from a community charged with the political, social and theological energy of Puritan colonization, cannot grasp the superstitious nature of that time. Modern humankind can, however, shed some light on those events through an investigation of the Puritan milieu.

The Puritans

Roman Catholicism was the religion of state until Henry VIII's formation of the Church of England in the early sixteenth century. To some the king had merely "cut off the head of Popery, but left the body of it yet within his realm" (Bremer, Francis J. **The Puritan Experiment.** [New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976] 4). To only alter the appearance of the religion was not enough.

England underwent great religious turmoil when Henry VIII died in 1547 and his sickly son, Edward VI, took the throne. During his short six-year reign movement away from Roman Catholicism was rapid and unmistakable. Upon his death in 1553, however, a strong and zealous advocate of Roman Catholicism, Mary Tudor, was crowned queen and many sympathizers of reform were either exiled or executed. The winds of change blew again when Mary Tudor's sister, Elizabeth I, was crowned in 1558. Her forty-four year reign established the cause of Protestantism in England. The Puritan movement began during this period.

The year 1565 saw the beginning of the end for the Puritans on English soil. What had begun as a protest against the vestments of the clergy, soon grew to vehement criticism of the practice of the Church of England in general. The chasm continued to widen during the reign of James I (1603–1625) and his son, Charles I (1625–1649), whose Catholic child-bride, Henrietta Maria, did much to influence strong anti-Puritan sentiment. The result was that by the late 1620's Puritanism had grown into a movement increasingly alienated from England's civil and religious leadership; a relationship that could not and would not be maintained happily.

Therefore, the Puritans entered the New World and settled the Massachusetts Bay colony in 1629.

Puritan Theology

Of course, Puritan theology as a whole is much too complex for this limited study. Let it suffice, therefore, to say that, overall, the theology of Puritanism was comprised of the teachings of Augustine and John Calvin. Within it there was teaching that established the mindset necessary to accept a concept such as witchcraft.

John Calvin (1509–1564), a reformer of considerable influence, published the first edition of his **Institutes of the Christian Religion** in 1536. In it he outlined the power of Satan and the threats of possession by demons. Warning all to fight against the Devil with the armor of God (Eph. 6:12–13), Calvin was quick to point out that all Christians were at war against "great armies" that attack the spiritually weak (Kors and Peters. **Witchcraft in Europe**. 1972, 203,208). Witchcraft was seen as clear evidence that one had made a bargain with Satan and practiced the evil deeds of his master.

Calvin, however, was by no means the first to sound this alarm. In 1140 Gratian, in **The Canon Episcopi**, warned Roman Catholic bishops to "uproot thoroughly from their parishes the pernicious art of sorcery and malefice invented by the Devil." In 1486, as the official handbook of witch detection, **The Hammer of Witches**, was published, Innocent III, one of the more infamous to wear the papal robes, issued a bull (decree) that all witches were to be burned.

In Constance, Switzerland (1480) a storm destroyed the corn and grape crops. Anne and Agnes Mindelen were accused of witchcraft and were burned for their crimes (Coffin, Charles Carleton. **Old Times in the Colonies**. [New York: harper and Brothers,1880] 303). The infamous Inquisition, remembered more notably in association with the detection of heretics, was used by Pope Alexander VI (1492–1503), no less evil than Innocent III, to deal with the problem of witchcraft. Such efforts grew rapidly over a period of time and its horrific "cleansing" of their communities may best be illustrated with the burning of some 600 in the bishopric of Bamburg, Germany and more than 500 at Lake Geneva, Switzerland in 1515.

In England (1549) Archbishop Cranmer directed the bishops to "inquire whether anyone makes use of charms, sorcery, enchantments, witchcraft, soothsayings, or any like craft invented by the Devil" (Coffin, 303). In the mid 1600's, one Matthew Hopkins was sent in search of witches. He looked particularly for pimples and warts, sure signs of witchcraft, and quickly delivered up the offending parties to trial and summary execution.

In New England the search continued undaunted. John Cotton, in October 1636, unsuccessfully submitted the "Cotton Code" for approval in Boston. Based primarily on the Mosaic law, the "Code" consisted of ten chapters and outlined matters of trade, commerce, industry, and so on. Also included was the demand for the death penalty for various crimes, including, of course, witchcraft. The so-called "Code of 1648" was enacted by the Massachusetts government which, according to its clear biblical influence, called for dealing with witches according to Leviticus 20:27 and Deuteronomy 18:10,11.

Therefore, the threat of witchcraft permeated every part of Puritan society. It was within their theology and had come to them as a clear threat through the centuries of European superstition. With the arrival of almost every boat to the New World came new tales of witchcraft and demon-possession. Books and pamphlets were published and read on the subject, preachers warned their frightened flock from their pulpits, and children were told to beware of shadows and sounds in the night. Anything unusual or unexplainable: an animal born dead, a physical deformity of man or beast, horrific storms was credited to the work of witches, and caused the suspicious to point accusing fingers.

Bruce Watson writes that "most New England 'witches'...were poor women over 40. Some were healers or midwives who had lost a patient or miraculously saved one. They were abrasive, quarreling with families and neighbors, often involved in lawsuits. They were, in a word, misfits" (Watson, 122). Others were physically afflicted in some way, probably with nervous or muscular disorders that are commonly recognized as such today, but such afflictions were otherwise attributed in a superstitious society raised in the shadow of devils.

Conclusion

To fully understand the events of the summer of 1692 requires an understanding of a matrix of things too complex for our brief survey.

One thing is for certain, however. Even though deciding "why" such events occurred is rather difficult, to see "what" occurred opens the door into a religious history often overlooked, or at best briefly summarized. Here is the seed-bed of religious thinking that took root and germinated into movements that formed the American colonies and eventually the nation. Here is the foundation of the denominations that formed the religious and social backbone of the early days of the United States. The call for reform never ceases and the desire for such change was hung upon a framework that was made up, in part, of the Puritan ideal.

To study the religious and social background of the witch trials of colonial Massachusetts is to study to the foundations of American religious history.

Robert Curry preaches for the church in Duncan, SC. Contact him at PO Box 728, Duncan, SC 29334-0728.

A Balanced Remembrance

By Robert A. MacDonald

"IF YOU LOVED ME, YOU WOULD have rejoiced, because I go to the Father" (John 14:28b). "Your sorrow will be turned to joy" (John 16:20b).

At the Lord's Supper table, it would be appropriate for those who officiate to reflect on *sorrow turning to joy*, as Jesus requested. Consider how such a service would proceed.

The Bread

The first speaker speaks clearly and audibly. As always, he says that the bread represents Jesus' body. He speaks solemnly. He may say that Jesus suffered a cruel death on the cross, the most humiliating death. He speaks in sorrow. He has not yet prayed, nor passed the bread.

Our "sorrow turns to joy" as he reminds us of the *purpose* of Jesus' death: that He prophesied that His body would not stay in the grave, that He would rise on the third day to return to God's side to await us who come to God through Him. Salvation; He offers! Our Savior; He is! We rejoice!

The first speaker then gives thanks for the bread with a joyous and clear emphasis on salvation.

Worshipers take the bread as the emblem of His body. They remember Jesus in sorrow or in joy according to the firmness of their tradition or the firmness of their new awareness of what Jesus requested. Some remember in sorrow, and then in joy, as Jesus proclaimed. In time, many do.

The Cup

This speaker also reflects first on sorrow, and then on joy. In sorrow he remembers, as always, that Jesus' blood was shed, and that He suffered pain. He may want to dwell on that thought. In the flesh, Jesus knew mortality; on the cross, He really died. In sorrow, the speaker's voice is solemn, but still audible and distinct.

Again, our "sorrow turns to joy" as the speaker goes beyond the discussion of the shedding of blood. He now emphasizes with a *joyful* voice the *purpose* of the crucifixion and of the cup of remembrance: Jesus said it "is my blood of the covenant" which is poured out "*for the forgiveness of sins*" (Matt. 26:28). To his own words, spoken joyously, the speaker may want to quote the writer of Hebrews 10:29, who declared that the cup is "the blood of the covenant that sanctifie(s)."

A prayer of thanks for the cup is offered with an emphasis on the joy of forgiveness.

Worshipers take the cup as the emblem of Jesus' shed blood. They remember Him in sorrow or in joy according to the firmness of their tradition, or the firmness of their new awareness of Jesus' statement. Some remember in sorrow, and then in joy, as Jesus proclaimed. In time, most do. The communion service closes with a joyous victory song.

Balanced Remembrance

Taking the Lord's Supper with Christians across the nation shows that most fail to be in a balanced remembrance of Jesus, as He asked. What does the Bible say about our remembrance of Jesus in the Lord's Supper? Consider Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 11:23–26: "For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.'" After quoting from the Lord, Paul explains to the Corinthians, "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (v. 26).

Is there a difference between the statements of Jesus and Paul? Jesus said, "do this in remembrance of *me*," while Paul explained, "you proclaim the Lord's *death* until he comes." Does remembering Jesus (as He asked) include remembering his death (as Paul instructs)? We say, "Yes!" There is much to remember; His death is but one part. Does proclaiming his *death* until He returns (as Paul said) include remembering *Him*? We say, "No." Yet, there must be consistency. Paul was inspired and taught by Jesus. There is consistency, of course, we can do both. We must do both, if we care to speak where the Bible speaks. We must remember Jesus' death (as all congregations do), and we must remember Jesus—"in remembrance of *me*"—(as some congregations may do). We must remember that Jesus said, "Your sorrow will be turned to joy."

Tradition

This broadening of our remembrance might seem to be a bold and frightening step away from our comfortable tradition of sorrow. It would also be a bold step away from insufficiency.

Some will be reluctant to change their comfortable tradition of sorrow into a remembrance of sorrow and joy—joyous thankfulness for sins forgiven and joyous assurance of a Savior awaiting us. One reason for their reluctance may be that they simply want to do as they have always done. However, one must not shun Scripture because "it has always been done the old way," or because they "just feel better that way." How they feel is of no consequence in seeking the truth.

Some congregations will consider it sacrilegious to add anything to pure sorrow, even though Jesus said, "If you loved me, you would have rejoiced" (John 14:28b), and "You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned to joy" (John 16:20b). These congregations should remember that Jesus admonished Pharisees, saying, "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!" (Mark 7:9).

Some congregations try to follow all the traditions of our forefathers in the faith, yet they overlook the most important tradition: The most important tradition of our Restoration forefathers is that they examined Scripture carefully, searchingly, and *changed their ways whenever they discovered a previously overlooked truth.* Many of us do not.

We must remember that Jesus made His choice and was willing to suffer and to give His life for us in order to pay the penalty for our sinfulness against God. For our sinful role in this cosmic drama we are sorrowful. From this redemptive work comes the forgiveness of sin and the offer of salvation validated by His victorious resurrection. In the Lord's Supper a church shows its joyous thankfulness and experiences the joyous assurance that Jesus will come again to claim us for Himself.

The purpose of this article is to encourage churches to celebrate the Lord's Supper with a balanced remembrance of both the sorrow of Jesus' death for our sins and the joy that comes from the knowledge that sins are forgiven and that Heaven awaits the faithful. The church in Hendersonville, NC began to practice a balanced remembrance in March 1994. Will other congregations do likewise?

Robert A. MacDonald worships with the church in Hendersonville, NC. He may be contacted at 600 Carolina Village Road, Apt. #31, Hendersonville, NC 28792-2888.

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Fisherman

By Charles R. Lambert

MANY TIMES I STOOD ON SOME boat dock waving goodbye to my father, but today my family waved goodbye to *us*. My dad loved fishing and it was his way of relaxing, and supplementing his income. He had six kids so maybe it was also a way of escape. One good thing about dad and his fishing was that whenever he went fishing, he caught fish. Dad never had a fishing tale that wasn't true; he brought the fish home. He loved to have a fish-fry, and he wanted all the neighbors to eat with him. His friends loved him for his hospitality.

We were at the landing at South Island ferry unloading the boat from its trailer. I took the bow line to keep the boat from floating down the waterway while dad pulled the trailer out of the water and parked the truck and the boat trailer in the parking lot. I looked down the paved road and saw Bill and Joe coming to join us. They had a boat, too, so we helped them unload and get their boat into the water. This was my first trip to North Inlet and I didn't want to miss a thing. When you fish for flounder like we were, you had to go at night.

It was late in the evening as we stood waiting for darkness. We were looking west watching for a storm headed our way. We loaded up and warmed up the motors on our boats. Bill and Dad were deciding whether or not to take Jones Creek into North Inlet during this storm. It was dark now and we had our running lights on as well as a spot light. When you fish at night you soon learn that often it is not beneficial to have a spot light because it is actually easier to see the silhouette of marshes and trees in the dark once your eyes get accustomed to the dark.

As we started up Jones Creek, the storm hit us. We had passed the point of no return. We were committed, and we could not turn back. The breakers were well over our heads and the boats tossed up and down while the white caps rolled all around us. It was rough water for a fourteen-foot boat and the rain really came down. We had a bail bucket and we started bailing the water out of the bottom of the boat. There was not one dry stitch of clothes on any of us.

We made excellent time in spite of the storm, and it left us just as fast as it came upon us. When the storm passed, we could see marsh grass all around us and many islands from which to fish for flounder. The worst trouble you can get into on this kind of outing is to get lost. Once you arrive everything looks the same. Trying to get our bearings in order to avoid getting lost, we were cruising along when we ran right over an oyster bed. If you have ever come to a dead stop from a speed of twenty miles an hour in the dark, then you know the kind of feeling that gripped us. Now was the time for the spot light. We had to get out of the boat and push the boat off the oyster bed, hoping it had not put a hole in the bow of the boat.

Oyster beds were all over the inlet and each time the tide changed the sand moved also, making it impossible to go around the oyster beds in the creeks the same way twice.

We finally arrived at the inlet. There were plenty of islands or sand bars and old Mr. Flounder would lie on those sandy islands at high tide. You fish for flounder as the tide goes out to sea. The flounder lay covered with sand in water about eighteen inches to two feet deep, waiting to feed on a minnow swimming by. The flounder is white on one side and black on the other, and he lies in the sand black side up. His average weight is two to four pounds.

It was time to do some serious fishing. Despite all the advancements mankind has made in the past six thousand years, we were fishing just as crudely and simply as they did in the beginning of time when they used a spear. We fished with a spear, wading in water about knee deep shining a lantern at the fish's eye. Today we call it flounder gigging.

We found a spot for the boat on the island, and we left it on the beach. Now, it was time to fish. Joe and Bill went one way around the island, and my dad and I went in the other direction. We eased along the shore looking for those two eyes buried in the sand. We gigged five flounder that night, and we paused every now and then to look up into the sky to see that vast universe, and we looked across the water and thought about the oceans that cover the earth. Man has always looked to the sea for food. He looks in awe at God's handiwork. When Jesus was on earth, it is no wonder that He chose fishermen to help spread the Gospel. Jesus chose two fishermen as His first two disciples according to Mark 1:17. As He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea. Jesus said to them "Come and I will make you fishers of men." Little did he know at that time, but Simon, later called Peter, would be privileged to preach the first gospel sermon, although he was a simple fisherman.

Are you a fisher of men today? Do your eyes reflect your love for the Lord and His church? If so, you, too, can "catch men" for the Lord just as Peter did so long ago. Just as I learned how to fish for food as a boy, I must learn to fish for men as a Christian. Each of us has this obligation to the Lord and to his fellowman. Come with us and become fishers of men for Christ Jesus.

Charles Lambert worships with the church in Myrtle Beach, SC.

Brotherhood News

By Michael R. Mobley

LENOIR, NC...John Mayo, minister for the church in Lenoir, announces that the church broke ground for its new building on March 22. Their hope is to be in the building by November 1, 1994. STATESVILLE, NC...The mailing address has been changed for the Abilene Church of Christ. It is now 634 Mocksville Hwy, Statesville, NC 28677. WINSTON-SALEM, NC...The South Fork church reports that a team of 15, including doctors, nurses, and support people returned on May 21 from a week in Northern Haiti. This is the fifth year that South Fork has sent a medical team into Haiti to do mobile clinics. This year's team treated over 1400 people and gave beans and rice to the needy. Doctors Charlie Branch and Mark Pearson were in charge of the team. RALEIGH, NC...The North Carolina Evangelism Seminar, hosted by the Brooks Avenue church on August 12–14, will feature the theme "Today's Families: Building and Strengthening Relationships." SANFORD, NC...The congregation in Sanford will host this year's Bible Bowl on August 27 beginning at 9:00 A.M. at the Lee County Civic Center in Sanford. This year's competition will be based on the Old Testament book of Judges. FLORENCE, SC...Stan Helton announces that Leonard and Holly Allen of Abilene, Texas will be with the Gregg Ave. church October 7–9. The Theme for the weekend program will be "In Quest of the Spiritual Life." Contact Stan at PO Box 956, Florence, SC 29503-0956 for more information. FLORENCE, AL...International Bible College announces its 1994 lectureship scheduled for September 22–24 with the theme "Worship Styles of the '90s." Featured speakers include Furman Kearley, Tom Holland, Jay Lockhart, Charles Hodge, and Hardeman Nichols. VASALIA, CA...The World Bible School has established a Memorial Tribute to Guy N. Woods. For details, contact WBS at 1-800-462-9173, or write WBS, 127 E. Caldwell Ave., Vasalia, CA 93277.

Send news items to Michael R. Mobley, PO Box 312, Mooresville, NC 28115-0312.

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Resolving Church Conflict

Carolina Christian

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Editorial

By Johnny R. Melton

TRADITIONALLY, THE TRIAD OF evangelism, edification, and benevolence has been identified as the work of the church. However, the primary work of the church is to worship God; and the fundamental character of worship is praise. Consider the first description of the church in Acts: "They devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ...All the believers were together and had everything common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to everyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:42, 44–47). Worship provided the fertile soil in which mutual edification (v. 46b), gracious benevolence (vv. 44, 45), and soul-winning evangelism (v. 47) were nurtured.

Paul extolled the wonder of God's redemptive work in terms of praise. "*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.... In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—*to the praise of his glorious grace*, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.... In him were chosen, having been predestined according to the plan him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, *might be for the praise of his glory.* And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—*to the praise of his glory*" (Eph. 1:3, 4b–5, 11–14; emphasis added).

The church in history begins with praising God. The redemptive work of God in Christ, which makes the church possible, is for the praise of His grace and glory. But not only that, Christians are called to unity and peace in order to facilitate this worship. "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, *so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, *in order to bring praise to God.* For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs *so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy*, as it is written: 'Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name.' Again, it says, 'Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.' And again, 'Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples'" (Rom. 15:5–11; emphasis added).

Indeed, not only is the church rooted theologically, historically, and practically in praise to God, but it is the function of all creation to worship Him. When John was allowed to gaze into the throne room of the universe, he declared, "Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing *'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!'* The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped" (Rev. 5:13–14).

The problem with saying the work of the church is evangelism, edification, and benevolence is not that church does not have responsibility in these areas; the problem is that these easily become ends within themselves. We may even be tempted to pursue "a spirit of unity" because of its pragmatic benefits: we all feel better when we get along with each other. However, we do not begin with ourselves, we begin with God. And the appropriate response to the wonder, marvel, and majesty of God is praise. "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord." (Psalm 148:6).

Resolving Church Conflict

Conflict Resolution

By Ron Newberry

THE CHURCH WAS STILL IN ITS INfancy in Acts 6. It was growing and changing; lives were being impacted; the kingdom was expanding rapidly. Then came a major conflict. The Grecian Jews's widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. The problem was not a shortage of food. The problem was they were just being ignored, overlooked, slighted by those who were distributing the food.

Imagine the results if this crisis had not been resolved properly. Imagine what would have happened to the church were this festering dilemma just ignored. Imagine the damage from the fallout has this conflict not been managed.

Most of us had rather live quiet, undisturbed lives serving God and worshipping Him in our congregations. Many of us have probably gone to great lengths to avoid conflict. Friction and confrontation make us uncomfortable. However, conflict is inevitable; it is, in fact, normal.

There are situations when conflict can certainly be deemed negative and even destructive. James A. Jones in his book **Managing Church Conflict**, makes the point that conflict is unhealthy if it results from trivia and not substance; if we argue about words and engage in godless chatter; if we do not process the emotions that accompany conflict; if we are not willing to listen to each other; if we take it outside the context of the group with which it originated; if we do not resolve or learn to manage it; or if we refuse to take responsibility for resolving conflict.

However, Jones asserts that conflict can be healthy. Several conditions have to exist for conflict to be positive. It has to come from group members attempting to interact with and relate to one another; who are trying to move to the next stage of development; and it results from growth which brings change, and from people who are intent on learning from the experience.

Let's apply these points to the situation mentioned earlier involving the church in Jerusalem in Acts 6. These Christians from various cultural backgrounds were attempting to live together in the church. It was necessary for them to relate to one another, even though some were Aramaic-speaking and others were Grecian Jews. They were struggling to form a new community out of the Christians from Asia, Egypt, Judea and a variety of other countries. The size of the groups resulting from the phenomenal growth of the church certainly exacerbated the problem of distributing the food. They certainly must have learned from the situation since there is not another word mentioned about it in Acts.

Looking closer, how did the church, in fact, resolve this emotionally charged conflict? The text implies that the apostles listened to the legitimate complaint. They assembled the entire group, explained the roles they and the group would play in resolving the issues, and set the ground rules for solving the problem. They made the compliners a part of the solution by allowing them to select from their group those to be responsible for taking appropriate actions.

The most astounding statement is made in Acts 6:5a, "This proposal pleased the whole group." Once the group selected the seven men

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requested by the apostles, the apostles gave them the responsibility of distributing the food to those widows in need.

The crucial point is made in Acts 6:7. "So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith." As a result of resolving this emotionally charged conflict, the church grew rapidly.

Unfortunately, not all conflicts can be resolved. Some people, frankly, do not want to resolve conflicts or they may not be willing to pay the price to resolve them. Some conflicts have been allowed to escalate to the point that a breach in relationship is eminent. Still other conflicts cannot be resolved because people refuse to deal with the emotions aroused by the issues.

This issue of ***Carolina Christian*** offers a variety of articles selected to help us learn how to approach conflicts. If we adapt the principles in each article to the conflicts in which we are involved, we will discover a more abundant life in Jesus and a life freer of stressors which dampen our individual and collective growth.

Word Study: *Strife*

There are at least six words in the New Testament that have typically been translated strife, factions, contentions, variance and disputes. One of those words, *eritheia*, occurs in the list of what Paul labeled the "works of the flesh" in Galatians 5:19-21. In this issue of ***Carolina Christian***, devoted to "Conflict Resolution," we would do well to comprehend both the meaning and the ramifications of *eritheia*, strife.

Eritheia has been translated strife, factions, selfish ambition and contentious. Scholars agree for the most part that the word *eritheia* comes from a word meaning "day laborer." It referred to one who worked for hire. That does not automatically have a negative connotation. The next step in the evolution of the meaning of this word, however, is significant to our study. *Eritheia* came to be associated with those who work *only* for pay. Their reasons for working were selfish ones. Their motive was "what's in it for me," with little regard for quality of workmanship, much less the joy of a job done well. They were devoted to their own interests exclusively.

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That brings us to New Testament times and the apostle Paul. His writings contain five of the seven times *eritheia* occurs in the New Testament; James has the other two occurrences. How does Paul use *eritheia*? What does it say to us about conflict specifically in the church?

Having put the Gentiles on notice in Romans 1 that they were lost without the gospel, Paul turns to the Jews in chapter 2 and condemns their judgmental attitude. They remained blind to the fact that they were guilty of doing the very things they condemned in others. They had stubborn, unrepentant hearts (2:5). He writes, "But for those who are self-seeking [contentious,KJV]and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger," (Rom. 2:8, NIV).

The church in Corinth was rife with sects and factions. Some followed Paul, some Peter, others Apollos, and still other sects claimed allegiance to Christ (1 Cor. 1:10-12). Paul takes them to task for their splits, divisions and party spirit. In his second letter, he expresses his fear that when he meets with them they may not have made the changes necessary for the church in Corinth to prosper. He writes, "For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be [debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults, KJV] quarrelling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder" (2 Cor. 12:20, NIV).

One has only to note the company strife keeps to conclude it is detrimental to the cause of Christ. It is associated with quarrelling, jealousy, fits of rage, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder.

The third occurrence of the word translated "strife" is Galatians 5:20, in the infamous list of the works of the flesh. Once again, the list of companion attitudes and behaviors is lengthy and horrendous. Personal ambition, factions and partisan wrangling are clearly identified as works of the fleshly nature and do not belong to one controlled by the Spirit of God.

Paul uses the word twice in Philippians. He says to the church regarding those who have made it their mission to oppose him, "The former preach Christ [of contention, KJV] out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains" (Phil. 1:17, NIV).

It is clear from the context that Paul is addressing those whose preaching has more to do with frustrating his efforts than teaching the truth and exalting Christ. Their contentious attitude predisposes them to behave in easily identifiable ways.

In Philippians 2:3, he urges the church not to do anything motivated by selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, he says, they should let their actions grow out of a spirit of humility. The spirit that generates contention and strife is the opposite of humility.

James gives additional insight. In James 3:14, 16, he states that one who behaves in contentious ways can rest assured that this does not originate in heaven. In fact, he concludes that it is earthly, unspiritual and devilish. Furthermore, it leads to disorder and other evil practices.

One can only conclude from the text and context of these seven uses of the word *eritheia* that where this attitude of personal ambition with a partisan, combative spirit is found in the church there will be sects, splits, feuds and division. One is forced to ask the question, "If there is such a cause and effect relationship between strife and major upheavals in the church, might we surmise that many, if not most, of the splits, divisions and factions in the church result from selfish ambition in preachers, editors and church leaders in general?" The combative spirit so prevalent among us seems rooted in this contentious spirit addressed by Paul and James.

We can rest assured that this divisive, contentious spirit which promotes parties and a rival gang mentality where one member shoots another on sight, does not have its origin from God. It is clearly from the devil. It eventually leads to the promotion of one party's agenda over that of all others and even over the welfare of the church.

As William Barclay concludes, "Such a motive would be bad enough in the world, but for such a motive to invade the Church is tragedy. And yet in fact it does. There are those whose work in the Church is designed to exalt their own prominence and importance, and who are bitterly disappointed when they do not receive the place of honour which they believe they have earned....Further, there are those in the Church...who do in fact plan and intrigue in support of a policy and a line; and it may well happen that they are more concerned to secure the triumph of their policy than to secure the general welfare of the Church" (**Flesh and Spirit**, pp. 55, 56).

While Barclay was not speaking directly to us or about us, he certainly nailed us. The only solution to this problem in Rome, Philippi, Corinth, Galatia and wherever it occurs today is to exalt Christ and not men; to make His teachings the center of our message and not the doctrines of men; to remember that we are brothers and not enemies. May we banish every hint of strife from our congregations and demand that our speakers, writers, editors, preachers, elders, and anyone who shapes public opinion in our churches, leave out the party spirit and bring in the humility of Christ.

Ron Newberry is pulpit minister for the Friendly Avenue church in Greensboro, NC. He is a member of the Board of Directors of Carolina Christian Publications, Inc. and a member of the Editorial Staff. He served as Guest Editor for this edition of ***Carolina Christian****. Contact him at 5101 W. Friendly Ave., Greensboro, NC 27410.*

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Resolving Church Conflict

Refusing to Quarrel

By Rob Albright

IT WAS DURING MY FIFTH YEAR IN school and my brother, Tim, and I were walking home from school when a bully approached us and asked my brother something. Since I was the "older" of the two, I felt I needed to know what was going on. The next thing I remember is getting hit in the stomach and having the wind knocked out of me. My natural reaction was to "fight" back, but I did not because I remembered our father saying, "Fighting never solves anything."

I also remember the temptation to "fight back" on another occasion. I had been preaching only three years and was just getting started with a congregation. My bulletin article drew the attention of a preacher who thought it necessary to write me a letter and to tell me how wrong I was for using the Revised Standard Version in quoting a portion of Scripture. He thought it necessary to broadcast my "digression" in a publication that seems to delight in brotherhood regulation. I was ready to fight again, but a much wiser preaching friend said that such argumentation would not promote peace. He read 2 Timothy 2:23, "Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels."

There are things that God has not specifically stated and dwelling on those matters will cause quarreling. What good does quarreling do? It profits nothing.

Doctrinal differences are real, but more conflicts arise over opinions than matters specifically stated by God. Unfortunately, some wish to quarrel about non-essential matters. Some will berate, threaten and become slanderous. They are just looking for a fight but classify their actions as "defending the faith."

Titus 3:9–11 teaches that a factious or divisive person needs to be warned once and then a second time. After those warnings the church is to have nothing to do with him. Why expose the church to such a "warped and sinful" person?

In our time the church is going through some changes. Not all these changes compromise the truth, but because human traditions are being changed, some are ready to quarrel. Just because we have done something for a long time does not mean it cannot be changed. Many good leaders have been accused of teaching falsely when, in reality, they no longer choose to be bound by such traditions. Quarreling over these things is disheartening and a waste of time. It shows improper attitudes and a lack of love.

Early in church relationships conflict existed. Probably the best noted disagreement is between Paul and Barnabas over Mark's desertion (Acts 15:36–41). But even here there is no indication of quarreling. They parted company, but years later Paul told the church in Colosse to welcome Mark if he came to them (Col. 4:10).

Yes, conflicts do arise among dedicated Christians, but does that mean we must build walls between us by quarreling with each other? Do conflicts give us the right to "quit the church"? Does that mean we must divide up sides and call each other names?

God's desire is for quarreling to cease and peace and love to reign supreme. Paul says, "God is not a God of disorder but of peace" (1 Cor. 14:33). Peace is promoted by avoiding quarrels! Not quarreling enhances peace. "A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to **overlook** an offense" (Prov. 19:11; emphasis added). Some things just need to be ignored.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God" (Matt. 5:9).

Rob Albright serves the Thomasville church as pulpit minister. Contact him at RR 4 Box 623, Thomasville, NC 27360.

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Resolving Church Conflict

When the Strong and Weak Collide

By Phil Stapp

WHEN WE WERE GROWING UP, MY older brother and I argued a lot. It was usually over little or nothing. But even when I knew I was wrong, I argued fiercely as a matter of pride. I would never admit to my brother that he was right. Looking back, I can only explain my actions as the result of pride and immaturity. Many of the conflicts that come between brothers and sisters in Christ seem to be the result of the same things.

Paul addresses conflict between the children of God in several of his letters. Some of the conflicts were a danger to true faith in Christ and toHis Lordship (such as those in Galatia and Colosse). Paul addresses those causing these conflicts with severe denunciations. Other conflicts, however, are considered to be over matters of opinion, and Paul deals with them in a much gentler fashion. The best example is found in Romans 14.

The conflict in Romans 14 is rather generic in nature. It included questions of diet (14:2), observing special days (14:5), and drinking wine (14:21). Rome was the kind of place where various types of conflict arising from different backgrounds and influences would be present. Here Paul deals with conflict and the question of the weak and the strong in a way that applies to many of the conflicts that we face today.

Before looking at chapter 14, consider some of Paul's statements that preface this chapter. "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you" (12:3). "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves" (12:9-10). "Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited" (12:16). "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (12:18). "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law" (13:8). "Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law" (13:10). "Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature" (13:14). Chapter 14 is the practical application of these principles to the Roman situation.

Different groups in Rome had different hangups, while the strong had found freedom from such hangups. The problem was not who was right or wrong, but how they were treating each other as a result of their differing opinions. The strong were looking down on the weak and the weak were condemning the strong (14:3).

In response, Paul reminded them they had no right to treat each other like that. Each one of them belonged to God as a result of the saving work of Christ. God was their master and judge. Their responsibility was to seek peace and mutual edification (14:19). This included not putting any stumbling block in another's way.

Now as then, the law of love reigns supreme. Loving one another and building each other up in Christ takes precedence over all else. The strong are required to put their love for the weak into action. The requirements of love come before liberty. This is not to say that the strong must give in to every little whim of the

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weak. It is to say that the strong are not to parade and protest their rights and freedoms to the detriment of the weak.

I have two sons. I am constantly trying to explain to the eight-year-old that there are things that his three-year-old brother just cannot understand. Many times this means that he must give in to the immaturity of his brother. But that is his responsibility as the older brother. It is to be the same in the family of God.

Our Heavenly Father reminds the stronger children of their obligation to the weaker:

"We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please he neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: 'The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.' For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God" (Rom. 15:1–7).

As children of God, let us give praise and glory to our Father in our love for each other. We are the family of God. Let's act like it.

Dr. Phil Stapp serves as pulpit minister for the Brewer Rd. Church of Christ in Winston-Salem. Contact him at 2010 Brewer Rd., Winston-Salem, NC 27127.

Resolving Church Conflict

The Role of the Peacemaker

By Bruce Thweatt

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO ON THE western frontier, one of Mr. Colt's products acquired quite a reputation as a peacemaker because of its popularity with certain lawmen. Actually, it did encourage a sudden desire for peace among those who encountered the rather large bullet which the Peacemaker Colt fired. It even encouraged those who were not shot by it to be peaceful enough to avoid becoming a target. Peace through intimidation (or death).

More recently we experienced the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD for short) as a formula for keeping the peace. As each side acquired thousands of nuclear weapons, the threat of retaliation became too great for survival, even after a devastatingly successful first attack. This capacity for counterattack insured that only a madman would launch the first nuclear attack. By this precarious balance of nuclear power, the world avoided nuclear war, and waged "cold war" instead. Yet, no one dared to call it peace simply because there was no "war" being fought. The truth was that there was a war going on, and peace was not the state of human affairs. Neither were we fooled into thinking that the world was a peaceful place, because even without fighting, we knew the struggle for supremacy was fully engaged. We knew that peace was not merely the absence of fighting.

Inside the church, peace is just as difficult an ideal as it is in the world. Even though we have committed our lives to the Lordship of Christ, we are not immune to the human emotions and thoughts which generate conflict. Conflict happens whenever more than one person has an opinion. People will continue to be remarkably different. Conflict, or difference is created merely by being alive. Only the dead have no differences of opinion. Peace is created by peacemakers, by people living as God would have them live. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God," Jesus says. God's sons are peacemakers. They are recognized as God's sons by the effect they have on their world. They make peace with one another. They don't merely cease shooting, they create genuine concern for one another. They do not consider others their enemy, even in the face of hostile behavior. Instead, they follow the example of the Prince of Peace who prayed even for those who were putting Him to death. If the story of mankind is a story of conflict, and competition, then the story of the church is of the call to live in peace with one another and with God.

Consider the role of Jesus as peacemaker. Paul wrote of the peace which Christ made possible. "For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. ***And he came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near***;" (Eph. 2:14-18; emphasis added). Jesus established peace between man and God, becoming "our peace" in making our reconciliation to God "through the cross." At the same time, Paul notes that we who were strangers to one another, separated by human allegiances and enmities, were made one by Him who made "the two into one new man, thus establishing peace." We are called to a new and different way of living in the church, because we have been made one, not by our efforts, but by the reconciliation in Christ through the cross. We, too, are called to be peacemakers, sons of God.

The need for peacemakers is self-evident; the question is how do we as Christians become peacemakers? What principles shall govern our actions toward each other? How shall we reconcile our differences when they are not matters of Scripture, but personal preferences? How do we know when to yield and when to stand firm? What does our personality type have to do with handling differences? Can we be peacemakers without being appeasers? What does being "diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" mean in application?

Good questions. Perhaps we should start with the idea of diligence "to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." If diligence is a whole-hearted effort, a giving of the very best possible, then what does the command of diligence in preserving the "unity of the Spirit" require? It requires an absolute commitment, a total dedication to maintaining the presence of the unity of the Spirit. We maintain it, not create it. It is not the result of our effort, but the work of Christ to which we have given ourselves. The unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace are not separate goals. One is essential to the other. We should not mistake alliance against a common foe for unity or peace. Though we may take on the outside world, fight wickedness, and oppose false doctrines together, that does not make us unified in Spirit or bond us together in peace. Spirit and peace do not require an outside enemy in order to work together. Stalin and Churchill worked together in World War II to defeat a common foe, but they were never in unity, nor were they ever bonded in peace. They were implacable foes. We must learn the fundamental lesson of peace, which Christ came to teach, that the greatest in the kingdom of God is the servant of all. The role of the peacemaker is to bring people to unity in God's Spirit, where peace is found.

This is by no means as easy as it sounds, or, unfortunately, as simple. To pursue peace is to accept the responsibility to act and think with the mind of Christ. Paul admonishes us to "let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts." (Col. 3:15) This is a non-negotiable principle of peace within the church. If any other thought, emotion, or ambition holds a place, there is no peace possible. As long as we hold on to whatever needs, likes, hurts, prejudices, or ambitions we may have, we deny the rule of Christ in our hearts, and hold the peace of Christ away from our fellowship. The peacemaker becomes the voice which calls us back to the mind of Christ, back to the heart of our Lord, back to our surrender to His purpose.

Another fundamental of peacemaking is found in Peter's quotation of Psalms 34, "For, '***Let him who means to love life and see good days refrain his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking guile. And let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.***" (1 Peter 3:10-11; emphasis added). The responsibility for seeking peace is always personal. No one else can seek peace for us, each of us must seek, and pursue peace for ourselves. This is an open-ended assignment. While life lasts, it cannot be completed. Whenever we wait for the other side to seek peace, we are wrong. We are told that God's way requires the constant effort to live in peace with one another, that the continual search for peace must become our way of living.

The peacemaker is the one who is willing to pursue peace. Pursue is a very active word. We pursue many things in our lives. Teenagers pursue popularity. Adults pursue success. Greedy people pursue riches. Some people pursue power. Even in the church. We know what it means to pursue something. It means single-mindedness, dedication, perseverance. It means refusing to settle for less. Peter says to pursue peace.

There is another principle which we must not ignore, if we would be peacemakers. It is found in Philippians 2: 3-8. "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." We must learn to regard others as more important than ourselves, so that we may put aside our own self-interest, and care for the interests of others, just as Jesus set aside His own interests in order to become the obedient servant who died to serve our best interest. "Have this attitude in you", Paul commands. We protest, Paul didn't know what I would have to put up with! He didn't know what that would cost me! He must never have been at a congregation like this one! If I do it his way, I might not get what I want! That's right! You might not get your way, but you might get God's way instead! There is no such thing as a self-serving peacemaker. To make peace we must serve God's purpose, concern ourselves with other's needs, and forget to worry about what we get out of it. We get peace in Christ out of it. What else is there?

What about the risk? It sounds dangerous to empty yourself. It sounds painful to become obedient to the death. It is. It was painful to Jesus. Just read the garden passages again. The question is not whether there is risk or not, the question is whether we will give ourselves up or not. In order to be peacemakers, sons of God, we must give ourselves up.

The church always needs people who have given themselves up to Christ. Is that not the basic definition of the church? Those who have been baptized into Christ? Those who have died to the old man, that Christ might live in them? That is supposed to be all of us. Yet we know that as long as we are human, and fall short of God's glory, the church will need peacemakers to call us back to the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace". One last thought from Romans 12:18, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." It does depend on you.

Bruce is pulpit minister for the Westside church in Rocky Mount, NC. Contact him at PO Box 8619, Rocky Mount, NC 27804-8619.

Resolving Church Conflict

Keys To Resolving Personal Conflicts

By Dennis Conner

"IF IT IS POSSIBLE," PAUL EXhorted the Christians in Rome, "as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men." Yet, as each individual's own experience painfully attests, conflicts with others sometimes occur in spite of our best efforts. And why is that? Simple. We are too human. Anytime you put at least two humans together for any significant length of time, conflict of some kind invariably results. Personalities clash, wills collide, and self-interests dominate. Whether it be in families, churches, on ball teams, the job, or whatever, conflict in human relationships is a given, more often than not leaving a path of destruction and emotional wounding in its wake. However, conflict does not have to be destructive and hurtful. In his book **Human Relationships and Your Career**, David

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Johnson writes, "It is not the presence of conflict that causes chaos and disaster, but the harmful and ineffective way it is managed. It is the lack of skills in managing conflict that leads to problems." In other words, while it may not be possible to avoid conflict entirely, it is possible to keep conflict from becoming entirely destructive. Though Johnson writes from a secular perspective, his point holds true for Christians as well. How can we go about resolving conflicts in a positive, even constructive, way?

First, *see yourself as a peacemaker.* Following Paul's lead in Romans 12:18 above, do everything you can to be at peace with others, even those with whom you might be engaged with some conflict. Go the second mile with the person or persons involved. Take the initiative in seeing the conflict resolved, even if you are not the one who initiated the conflict itself, thus making it clear to all involved that peace, and not your own agenda, is your priority.

Second, *respond to a conflict in its earliest stages.* Confrontation is never easy for anyone, but when you first have the feeling that a relationship is moving in a negative direction, find the courage to deal with it. Share your concerns with the other party before the situation gets any worse. Avoiding the situation and just hoping that it will go away, or take care of itself, is usually futile. When confrontation does not take place early, tensions build, resentments simmer, and hurts fester, almost guaranteeing a destructive conflict.

Third, *as you confront, keep the issues at the center and not personalities.* It is too easy to attack the person, and not the problem. Besides being contrary to the guiding Christian principle of love, emotional personal attacks contribute absolutely nothing to a discussion. Instead, they serve only to fan the flames of conflict. There should be a commitment to working and focusing together on the real issues at the heart of the disagreement.

Fourth, *encourage complete honesty in any discussions.* Paul put it this way, "...putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another," (Eph. 4:25). The tendency in confrontational discussions is to camouflage the core issues, or to focus on peripheral issues, thereby avoiding the real (and usually the most painful) issues. Everyone must be allowed to speak freely and honestly without feeling guilty, or without the fear of reprisal.

Fifth, *be open to all viable options.* "Well, there's no way I'm going to agree to that." "I really don't see how that can work." You've heard them all before; maybe even said some of them yourself. These are the pronouncements of the closed mind. When a mind is closed, so is the door to resolution. Being open to alternatives requires a certain degree of humility; we must acknowledge that ours is not the only way.

Sixth, *be committed to a resolution.* Do not allow conflicts to remain open-ended. It is not enough to agree that a conflict *should* be resolved. Rather, agree that it *will be* resolved, even if the resolution is that the parties involved just agree to disagree. If resolution is not a stated goal, it is almost a foregone conclusion that efforts toward reconciliation will fail.

Seventh, *call in a third party if necessary.* A conflict in the church in Philippi involved two otherwise godly women, Euodia and Synteche (Phil. 4:2-3). Paul urged them to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yet, he apparently realized they needed help in resolving their differences, so he urged an unnamed "true companion" to get involved. A neutral third party generally brings a more balanced perspective to the process and can be valuable in keeping discussions on a productive course. If efforts at resolving a personal conflict seem to be going nowhere, it may be wise to consider help from an additional source.

Finally, *the entire resolution process must be carried out in a spirit of prayer.* Before the other party is confronted, pray. When the other party is confronted, pray together. During discussions, pray (especially when the discussions begin to become emotionally charged). And when a solution is reached, or a breach in fellowship is repaired, offer a prayer of thanksgiving and praise. When hearts are joined together in genuine prayer, differences have a way of dissolving, or least of becoming more manageable.

Negativism and ugly spirits need not prevail when conflicts arise. Let us do all that we possibly can to be at peace with one another, but when conflicts arise in spite of our best efforts, let us pursue resolution with Christlike love.

Dennis Conner serves the Yadkinville church of Christ. He may be contacted at RR 6 Box 697, Yadkinville, NC 27055.

The Role of Church Leaders in Resolving Conflict Among Members

By Walter Edwards

THE NEW TESTAMENT CLEARLY teaches that elders are shepherds. "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care..." (1 Peter 5:2a). God's leaders are to "keep watch over" the members of the congregation with which they worship and serve (Heb. 13:17a). Shepherding includes spiritually feeding, protecting, nurturing, guiding and healing. The work of God's spiritual shepherd involves resolving conflicts between flock members. An elder, Brother James Cox, in **"...With the Bishops and Deacons"** states: "In the case of an evangelist, counseling might be classified as an optional duty but in the eldership it is a command to be a counselor of the members of the flock" (p.218). Counseling, including problem solving, is a "very necessary function as shepherd of the local flock" (p. 219).

Just as sometimes there are problems between physical family members, problems arise between spiritual family members. There may be conflicts between brothers and sisters, Bible class teachers and pupils, preacher and members, leaders and members, elders and deacons, elders and preacher, and/or deacons with deacons. Not all conflicts involving members relate specifically to spiritual concerns. Generally speaking, elders are faced with more relationship problems than strictly spiritual ones. Recently a highly respected elder observed: "Relationship problems are the most difficult problems elders have to deal with."

The apostle Paul asked the Corinthians who were experiencing severe difficulties even to the point of going to court before unbelievers: "Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? (1 Cor. 6:5b). God prefers that spiritual family conflicts be kept within the family and this is where elders have a great opportunity and challenge.

Elders must be approachable before they can be conflict resolvers. An elder may possess effective problem solving skills, but if he isn't the kind of person people feel comfortable approaching, they will not go to him. All elders in a typical eldership have different personalities, backgrounds and attitudes. One person may feel more comfortable talking with one leader and another person may feel more comfortable talking with another. Each shepherd must understand this and never become envious or hurt if more members share their difficulties with some other elder that they do him.

What kind of leader do most feel at ease in contacting with a problem? One who is loving, caring, understanding, fair, willing to listen without prejudging, experienced in coping with life and genuinely spiritual. A shepherd must have exhibited a willingness to delve into the serious concerns of others. (Some people had simply rather not be burdened with other people's problems.) Also, an approachable person is one who has demonstrated that he is firm and steady in insisting on following the teachings of the Word but is not unreasonably harsh in is attitudes and is not too quick to condemn. An elder is perceived as approachable or unapproachable based on the life he lives day in and day out, his attitudes displayed when in contact with the members' homes. The attitudes he reveals while visiting during a crisis time and while teaching a class are also extremely important.

Elders who are genuinely interested in helping their people cope with difficult situations will remember these cardinal points. First, as a situation is presented, they should do their best to determine what the real problem is. Look behind what is said at first. What one hears may be only peripheral. For example, a family that periodically asks for financial help may have sufficient income. They may need help with budgeting and money management.

Second, there are at least two sides to every problem. Guard against jumping to a conclusion before hearing the particulars of both sides.

Third, always keep in confidence information that is shared. One should not even share confidences with his spouse.

Fourth, the parties involved in the dispute should be urged to follow biblical principles. An example would be having a person obey Matthew 18:15-17 rather than insisting that they do something "right now." James Cox observes, "We are not advocating that elders become psychologists.... We simply suggest that the laws of God be used...to talk to a person and suggest a solution" (p.218).

Fifth, leaders should make themselves available to their spiritual flock. For example, announce a time when one elder will be in an appropriate location such as the church library or conference room should anyone want to see him. At first, few if any may respond, but elders are at least sending the message that they are willing to help.

Sixth, when a situation unfolds that one does not feel he has the skills necessary to handle, he must not be afraid to say so, while at the same time offering to aid the person in locating competent assistance.

Seventh, when appropriate, utilize the talents of fellow Christians in or outside the congregation. An example might be to enlist a trained person to conduct parenting or grief recovery classes. Elders cannot do everything; nor should they be expected so to do.

Eighth, elders should never permit their nearness to a situation to lead them to compromise biblical teaching.

Ninth, when presented with a particularly difficult or potentially explosive situation, many shepherds feel that they need the counsel of their fellow pastors. They explain to the person that they are a team and, with the person's permission, they will consult with the others and get back with them.

Perhaps more than any other group in the Lord's Kingdom, shepherds feel the constant need for wisdom. James answers: "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5).

Walter Edwards serves the Northview church in Statesville as pulpit minister. Contact him at 1210 Museum Rd., Statesville, NC 28677.

Resolving Church Conflict

Book Reviews

By Tim Sensing

Growing Through Conflict. Jerry and Becky Gross, Editors. Abilene, TX: Quality Publications, 1984.

JERRY AND BECKY GROSS HAVE COMpiled a useful text in understanding conflict and conflict resolution from a Christian perspective. All thirteen lessons are followed by discussion questions. Lessons are written by Jerry and Becky Gross, Dan Blazer, Philip Slate, James Jones, and John Tracey. Each chapter is well researched and written in a clear understandable style. Although useful for individual use, the primary value of this book is for congregational use.

The title of the book implies managing conflict rather than suppressing, ignoring, or bullying your way through it. Some of the subjects covered are: styles of conflict resolution, self-esteem, valuing others, confrontation, attitudes, anger, conflict that arises from differing personalities and perspectives, and more. Two chapters are devoted to a Christian's view of personhood and the many traps we fall into that devalue others.

Conflict is inevitable. Clashes arrive when people see things differently. Conflict varies in intensity and may be good or bad. It is how conflict is managed that will determine if the individual and the group can grow beyond the encounter. Often the climate of defensiveness and self-justification will lead to a destructive outcome.

Although there are many practicle suggestions on how to work through conflict, the greatest strength of the book addresses attitudes. For example, how we value one another will contribute to whether we successfully deal with any conflict that may arise. We need to learn to respect and accept individuals with whom we disagree. In the climate of respect and acceptance opportunities for positive results arise. Upon successfully addressing attitudes that enable congregations to grow, the authors also provide various tools that help individuals to implement strategies that are useful in healing.

Dan Blazer's chapters are especially insightful. He explores the nature of conflict that exists within churches. There are devastating results in many churches that do not learn how to manage conflict appropriately. Yet, the church that faces conflict openly and honestly will grow. Churches must care enough to confront the issues in love.

Other Resources

The plea for relevance has called many church leaders to become change agents. This has brought conflict even in the most receptive and progressive congregations. Some of this change is long over due. Some of this change reflects a growing tendency of the church become secular. Correspondingly, in recent years there has been a growing amount of research and literature that comes under the general heading of "congregational studies." Scholars have drawn on the social sciences to try to understand the way congregations work as a system.

All of these groups provide regular conferences and consultations to examine the way churches and their leaders work together. If you want to pursue this research, you can write to the following addresses requesting a bibliography of their publications, as well as the schedule of their workshops and conferences, which are held throughout the continental United States so that travel costs can be kept within reason. The Center for Parish Development, 5407 S. University Avenue, Chicago, IL 60615; The Alban Institute, Inc., Mount St. Alban, Washington, D.C. 20016; The Grubb Institute, 1900 L Street NW, Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Dr. Tim Sensing, P.O. Box 1861, Mebane Street Church of Christ, Burlington NC 27216-1861.

Brotherhood News

By Michael R. Mobley

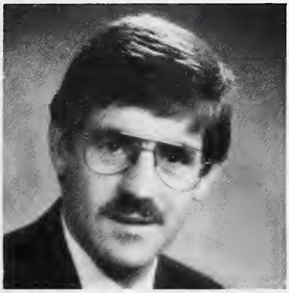
SURFSIDE, SC...The Grand Strand congregation announces that it has moved into its newly constructed 250 seat building at 2212 Glenns Bay Rd. It was built with the assistance of many of the members working long hours on the site. The preacher is Tom Gilliam. The phone number for the church will be (803) 650-9711. Everyone is invited to attend the Homecoming and dedication service on September 4. Also, the church will be conducting it youth rally at Huntington Beach State Park, September 23-25, with Jim Denison of the Hilton Head congregation. The theme will be "A Common Love." CHARLOTTE, NC...Sam Norman, a member of the Archdale church and a charter member of the Board of Directors of Carolina Bible Camp, died July 21, 1994 of a heart attack. Brother Norman, better known as "Big Sam," was affectionately referred to as the "Preacher Emeritus" of the Archdale church. He was 69 years old. STATESVILLE, NC...The Northview congregation is directed a flood relief effort for the victims in Georgia. The supplies were delivered to the Beattie Rd. church of Christ in Albany, GA, August 31 and September 1. BURLINGTON, NC...The Mebane St. congregation will be conducting a Family Money Management Seminar with Dr. Emol Fails, 9:00-4:00 on September 10, as a part of their community outreach ministry. GREENSBORO, NC...The Friendly Ave. church will host its annual Ladies Day on September 24. The theme will be "In My Father's House Are Many Mansions." SHELBY, NC...After 30 years and 2 months of fruitful ministry with the Warren Street church, Tom Bolick resigned on July 31. Tom is a native North Carolinan who has served the church well. ***Carolina Christian*** wishes him and his wife, Gay, godspeed.

Carolina Bible Camp & Retreat Center, Inc. in conjunction with Carolina churches of Christ presents...

Church Leadership Seminar

October 28–29, 1994

A Seminar designed for all Church Leaders—especially Elders, Deacons, and Preachers


Dr. Earl Lavendar

Resource Person:
Dr. Earl Lavender,
Nashville, Tennessee

Seminar Theme:
Worship in the Church of God's Intent

Topics:
Friday, October 28
"What Is Worship?"

A careful consideration of the many passages that speak of worship in terms of an assembly and its implications on life.

Saturday, October 29

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Balancing tradition and the need for change. Meeting needs without "Marketing the Church."

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& Retreat Center
Mocksville, NC
For more information, contact:
Johnny Melton
3305 12th Avenue Place SE
Conover, NC 28613-9609
Telephone: 704-465-6739
Fax: 704-465-4443

The program will begin at 7:30 P.M. on Friday, October 28 and it will conclude at 3:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 29. There will be a $25/person Registration fee. ***(The fee covers overnight lodging for Friday, breakfast and lunch on Saturday, and handout materials for Seminar participants. Make checks to*** **Church Leadership Seminar*)***

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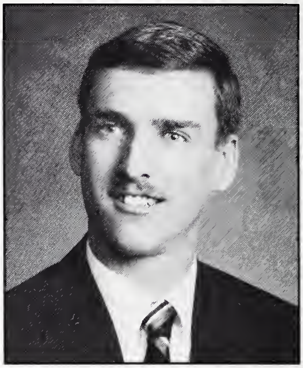

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

VOL. 36, NO. 10 OCTOBER 1994

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts,

as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And do not bring us to the time of trial,

but rescue us from the evil one.

—Matthew 6:9—13

Carolina Christian

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Editorial

By Johnny R. Melton

TWO EVENTS IN OCTOBER DESERVE special attention. First, Harding University Graduate School of Religion is offering a short course at Carolina Bible Camp and Retreat Center in Mocksville, NC. The dates for the course are October 24–28. The course is "Church Growth Through Small Groups." Dr. John Ellas, Director of the Center for Church Growth in Houston, Texas, is the instructor. The course can be audited for a special price of $80 and overnight lodging is available at the camp. This is an excellent opportunity for church leaders to engage in serious study of an important topic in community with brethren from the Carolinas.

HUGSR is already making plans to offer another extension course at CBC and Retreat Center in the Spring 1995 semester. It is hoped that there will be enough interest to warrant offering extension courses in this location on a regular basis.

Certainly, such extension courses are useful if one is pursuing a graduate degree. However, the value of these offerings is far greater than that. These course offerings provide a wonderful opportunity for continuing education. A church would do well to send its preacher (expense-paid) to such classes regularly. An investment in special study will pay rich dividends.

Church Leadership Seminar

The second October event deserving attention is the Church Leadership Seminar, also scheduled for Carolina Bible Camp and Retreat Center in Mocksville. The leadership Seminar is scheduled for October 28–29. Last year ten North Carolina churches joined efforts with Carolina Bible Camp and sponsored the first Church Leadership Seminar. One hundred elders, deacons, preachers, and other leaders attended that program. It was such an enormous success that the participants recommended that the seminar become an annual affair.

The topic for the seminar, *Worship in the Church of God's Intent*, is important and timely. Because worship is a biblical issue, it is inherently important, but not all important topics are timely. One only has to pick up almost any religious journal (brotherhood or otherwise) and thumb through the pages to discover the timeliness of this theme. Worship is being discussed nearly everywhere. This seminar is designed to provide a biblical and theological foundation for discussing worship and for evaluating the changes in both style and substance that are being suggested from various quarters.

Dr. Earl Lavender, one of the ministers of the Harpeth Hills church in Nashville, Tennessee and an adjunct professor at David Lipscomb University, is the resource person for the seminar. Brother Lavender has written **A Biblical Pattern for Church Growth**, and with Robert Glenn he has co-authored **The Church of God's Intent: Strategies for Renewal**. He is well qualified to lead this seminar.

Carolina Christian readers are encouraged to take advantage of both of these opportunities for fellowship and instruction during October.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is the featured theme for this issue of ***Carolina Christian***. Dan Blazer and Bailey Forrest have collaborated in bringing this material together. Both brethren are interested in this topic for more than one reason. They are interested in it from a biblical perspective. Forgiveness is a biblical concept and it is worthy of study for that reason alone. What is more important, forgiveness is a quality of God, and anyone devoted to godliness must be concerned with the issue of forgiveness. In fact, we are never more like God than when we forgive. Because Dan and Bailey are godly men, they are interested in pursuing this topic for its spiritual significance.

However, besides the pursuit of spirituality that has brought them to the subject of forgiveness, Dan and Bailey are interested in the topic because of its practical significance. Dr. Dan

Blazer, a deacon at the Brooks Avenue church in Raleigh, NC, is a psychiatrist and the Dean of Medical Education at Duke University. He knows from observation how important forgiveness is not only to spirituality, but also to physical and mental well-being. Bailey Forrest, College Minister for the Brooks Avenue church for the past eight years, has recently completed a Master's degree in Counseling Education at NC State University. His thesis was on Forgiveness as a counseling strategy. He, too, has been impressed with how important forgiveness is for people in their everyday lives.

We are grateful for the work done in bringing these articles together. We pray that they will do good. A future issue will contain more articles on this theme.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness

By Dan G. Blazer and Bailey Forrest

THE MODEL PRAYER OF JESUS (Matt. 6:9-13) is a prayer of praise and petition, with one requirement of the person who prays: "forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." No true Christian doubts the directive to forgive those who harm us. Forgiveness, however, is among the most misunderstood concepts for Christians in the twentieth century. Two issues of ***Carolina Christian*** will be devoted to forgiveness. The first provides concept-oriented reviews of the subject, with Vernon Dugger exploring God's forgiveness in the Old Testament, Bailey Forrest reviewing four choices for handling significant hurt, Patti Fite providing a view of forgiveness through the eyes of children, and Ross Thomson balancing anger and assertiveness within the context of forgiveness. In the second issue, more application-oriented topics related to forgiveness will be reviewed, such as forgiveness of abuse, forgiveness in marriage, and forgiveness of dysfunctional families.

Forgiveness is a difficult concept for us to accept; it is inherently illogical. The God of the Old Testament was a God of justice. "For the Lord loves justice; he will not forsake his saints. The righteous shall be preserved forever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off" (Psalm 27:28). An old Jewish prayer suggests, "Even God prays, 'May it be My will that My love of compassion overwhelm My demand for justice.'" Despite our recognition of our sinful nature and our need of forgiveness from God, it seems unjust to be asked by God to forgive persons who have deeply hurt us and who, perhaps, do not seek our forgiveness. Yet Christian forgiveness is not limited to those who ask for it. Jesus gazed from the cross upon soldiers gambling for His garments and upon disciples who doubted all that He had taught them. Nevertheless, He said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). The apparent conflict between perspectives of justice and forgiveness leaves many Christians confused about how they should feel toward an offender.

Forgiveness also appears to be a weakness to some of us. S.J. Perelman said, "To err is human; to forgive supine." Anger, which we often sanctify as righteous indignation, energizes us and may protect us. For example, if you cheat me while my guard is down, while I trust you, then I can prevent your cheating me a second time by putting up my guard and mobilizing my anger. If I forgive you, however, you may view me as weak, a door mat over whom you can walk as often as you please. Does forgiveness require us to decrease our assertiveness?

In many situations, it is not at all certain that forgiveness will change the behavior of the person we forgive. Jesus words of wisdom for daily living in the New Testament are, for the most part, practical and effective in creating an atmosphere of respect, equality and peace. We are to be "the salt of the earth, the light of the world" (Matt. 5:13–14). Forgiveness, however, especially forgiveness freely extended, appears at times to not bring peace and harmony, but rather to perpetuate evil doing and suffering. For example, the woman who repeatedly returns to a physically abusive husband, "forgiving him" only to be beaten again, surely must perpetuate abusive behavior rather than bringing peace and harmony.

Forgiveness, therefore, is at times not easy to rationalize as an appropriate doctrine, much less to practice. Yet no command from Jesus is more clear than to forgive and keep forgiving. When Peter asked, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus answered, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven." Jesus then explained the logic. He related the parable of the wicked servant, who was forgiven by a king, but who, in turn, would not forgive a man who owed him a debt. All rationales for the practice of forgiveness by Christians must begin with the recognition that each of us has been forgiven far more than we ever can forgive.

The logic of forgiveness, however, does not end with comparing the debt we owe to God with the debt owed to us by others. Forgiveness need not be weak. In no way does forgiveness require that the forgiver re-enter a dangerous situation. We can be certain that the king who forgave his servant a debt of 10,000 talents in Matthew 18:23-35, as described above, had no intention of allowing the servant to accumulate another debt of 10,000 talents. In fact, forgiveness followed a promise by the servant to repay his debt. Though the king did not require of the servant the payment of the debt, we must assume that he would not again put himself at risk of losing money to this servant. In like manner, it is difficult to believe that God would want an abused woman to return to her husband if, by returning, she placed herself at high risk for continued abuse. Forgiveness is not "conditional," but conditions certainly should be placed on the relationship, after an injustice is forgiven, to protect the victim from harm in the future.

Part of the logic of forgiveness is the illogic of fair retribution. Retribution is costly to the individual who wants to punish another. At times, it is impossible to "get even." Typically, moral decency, even the decency of worldly society, imposes restraints on retribution. If a woman drinks too much alcohol at a restaurant, drives her car toward home and accidentally kills a child, few of us would require the life of this woman. Many would encourage a brief prison sentence, removal of her drivers license, and required rehabilitation; but "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" just doesn't hold under these circumstances. Though far from perfect, society's penalties for harm done to others are not based, for the most part, on the *lex tallones*, that is, the law of retaliation. Rather, we also structure our system of justice on the intent of the harm, the rehabilitation of the one who causes the harm, and the level of punishment that will deter harm in the future. For example, though "drunk driving," in and of itself, is of no harm to anyone, we have exacted ever more strict punishment for this behavior, to deter the potential harm that may result from drunk driving.

From a human perspective, forgiveness is both unreasonable and logical. It is a subject that has intrigued and perplexed philosophers since antiquity. For those of us trying to live a Christian life, however, forgiveness is a command, although it is not easy for us to obey. We must make our best effort to pursue forgiveness. God's forgiveness teaches us that it is the choice that saves, and it empowers us to follow suit in our human relationships (Col. 1:21–23 and 3:12–14). These articles are offered to assist the reader to better accomplish this difficult requirement of the Christian, and to remind each of us that few words describe our state in Christ better than "the forgiven."

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Grace in the Old Testament

By Vernon Dugger

GRACE. WHEN I SAY THE WORD I expect the ground to shake. Why has this word so impacted the people that are trying to serve God? It is either misunderstood, or misused, or not used enough. It might be a frustrating word because we don't understand its nature. Unmerited favor does not make sense in our culture. We earn everything, and we are fiercely independent. We don't want anything that we don't deserve. When God tells us that He loves us and desires so much to have a relationship with us, we are confused and overwhelmed. We ask Him why, and He replies because He loves us. Now, we are lost. Why should God love us? As we probe the Bible for the answer to that question, we begin to acquire an understanding of what it is about God that moved Him to have anything to do with humankind. With this, we begin the lifelong task of understanding the basic nature of God. Grace is picked apart and disputed over because it is God's very nature. We have a very strong desire to understand our Maker. When we struggle to understand grace, we begin to learn what it means to forgive and to be forgiven.

The Old Testament is where we see our first images of the grace of God. This is where I would like to focus. Before we begin, let me make a disclaimer. I am as confused about this subject as most; I am not an expert on grace; and I am one of the strugglers in the process of understanding. The words I share with you are not the final words, but words that might challenge you to enter the struggle. It seems fitting to begin with some definitions of grace. Then we will speak to a few passages in the Old Testament concerning grace.

Grace is understood by most as unmerited favor. There is no specific word in the Old Testament used to denote grace, instead different Hebrew words are translated "grace." The Hebrew word **hen** is used to describe the sense of favor or inclination found in grace. In a limited sense, it refers to the relationship that man has with God. It is the favor of God bestowed upon the righteous man. The fuller meaning of grace in the Old Testament is expressed in the Hebrew word **hesed**. It is often translated "steadfast love" or "mercy." It refers to the covenant commitment established by the action of God. In the Old Testament, God's grace is seen again in the concept of justice. However, these terms are not used to describe two opposite characteristics of God, but two attributes of love, which is at the center of God's nature. To begin understanding these ideas as expressed in the Old Testament, let us first examine Abraham.

We first read of Abraham in Genesis 12. God comes to Abraham and tells him that He is going to bless those who bless him, make a great nation from him, and the whole earth will be blessed through him. God wants Abraham to respond in obedience. Abraham slowly begins to trust that God will do what He says. God transforms him into a new creature. Abraham begins as a man that takes his time in following God and does not come to the land of Canaan directly. He lies about his relationship with his wife, not believing that God can protect him. But, what a man he becomes! He is the man that stands at the altar with knife raised to sacrifice his own son. Abraham is willing to sacrifice the seed that will give him the great nation, because he trusts in God. What a change God makes in his life. A change made by grace.

Why is it that God chose Abraham? Was it because he was a great man of wealth? A man of trust? Did he show any signs of being anything but a normal human? God broke into history and chose Abraham as the man through

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whom He would establish the possibility of a personal relationship with the human family. It was His steadfast love and graciousness that gave God the motivation to reach out to and to have a relationship with humankind. God knew that men and women could not, by themselves, repair the breach in their relationship caused by sin. So He moved and He chose in His grace to act.

Another example of the grace of God in the Old Testament is found in Exodus 34 when God is rewriting the Ten Commandments. A description of the nature of God is given which is both clear and concise, and which becomes the basis of the old covenant. In verse 6 God describes Himself as a God of graciousness and compassion, full of steadfast love. Moses has seen this God at work. He is patient with His new nation of people and gives them what they need. They needed food that He provided. They needed water that God gave them. They needed law to give them structure and guidance to help them understand themselves as a nation of people. God is the God who brought them out of slavery. Not because they deserved it, but because He loved them. God chose to be gracious to Israel because it is His nature to do so.

In Exodus 34:7, God is described as one that maintains love and forgives sin. But, He is also a God of justice that will not leave the guilty unpunished. Many see the God of the Old Testament as angry and cruel, ready to pounce on the first person that steps out of line. His judgment is not set against His love and graciousness, but as part of it. God could not love if He did not discipline. The pain inflicted on His people is intended to bring humans to repentance and change. It is a warning out of love that if humans do not change, the end will be worse. Only a loving God would warn His people at the risk of being rejected as harsh, to help them to avoid more serious suffering.

I often read Hosea to understand our gracious God. At the beginning of the book, God calls Hosea to become a living metaphor for the relationship that God has with Israel. The Israelites are committing spiritual adultery, yet God still loves them. But God is not mocked. Gomer and Israel are punished. God asks Hosea to remove himself from Gomer in 3:2-4 for He is going to remove Himself from His people. In 5:15 God tells Hosea the purpose of His punishment is to cause an admittance of guilt. In chapter six the people repent on an external or superficial level and God replies to the false repentance with powerful words:

"Therefore I will cut you to pieces with my prophets. I will kill you with the words of my mouth, my judgments flashed like lightening upon you. For I desire mercy not sacrifice, and the acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6: 5-6).

These are among the most poignant words in Scripture that describe the nature of God and how He acts toward His people. Israel has tried to return to God in an external way. They hoped that by providing the right sacrifices God would relent from His punishment. But their heart was not in it. The two words translated "mercy" and "acknowledgment" of God are the same Hebrew words discussed earlier. God is looking for true desires and faith as the basis of the commitment we make to Him. His love for us is rooted in this mercy and grace. God has loved us and wants our responses to be not only external. God did not want the Israelites to stop the sacrifices. He wanted them to sacrifice out of heartfelt devotion. God lifted His people out of sin, not because they deserved it, but because He loves. He wants our actions to draw from the same love and faith.

The Old Testament is the account of God reaching out to sinful people and desiring to have a personal and on-going relationship with them. This relationship is based on their trust in His graceful acts. We see the ultimate expression of God's grace in Christ and understand God better through the incarnation of His son. Let us not forget that the message of the Old Testament was given by the same God of the New Testament. His nature has not changed, but He now expresses that nature through Christ. His grace and mercy can be understood more clearly in Christ. May we see the graceful God of mercy who punished His people in both the Old and the New Testaments, while at the same time holding out the hand of forgiveness? May

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we respond to Him not with externals only, but with an internal lifelong commitment to be obedient, graceful, and loving?

I will never understand completely the grace of God and all the different expressions of grace that He has given to us. But I can never forget the powerful images of the Old Testament that give us an understanding of our gracious and just God. When we say His words, we are on holy ground. Let us tread softly and learn to be gracious and just ourselves.

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Forgiveness

Where Do I Go from Here? Four Paths from a Painful Offense

By Bailey Forrest

IT IS DIFFICULT—WE MIGHT EVEN believe impossible—to forgive someone who has deeply hurt us. I remember reading about a Christian family in Kentucky which did what seems to be impossible ("Could They Forgive Their Son's Killer?" in *Reader's Digest*, May, 1986, pp. 136–40). Their eighteen-year-old son was killed in an auto accident caused by a drunk driver. This led to understandable turmoil in dealing with the guilty young man. Because of their relationship with God, however, the parents decided to pursue a route of forgiveness in their future relationship with the man. Then a shocking result happened. After prayer and progression toward forgiveness, the parents befriended the man, and eventually led him to Christ.

What a remarkable result from such a tragic event. So remarkable that one of the most read magazines in the world told it. We humans, even we Christians, are slow to believe that such forgiveness is possible. We may even question if this family is living honestly with reality.

Whatever we may believe about the possibility of forgiveness, what is certain is that a painfully offensive hurt must be managed. Because the incident has happened it *is* dealt with. There are some choices in handling the pain, but going on as if it didn't happen is *not* one of them. In what follows I describe four routes that may be chosen to manage the pain of an harmful offense.

Many believe the Christian response to a painful offense is to live and act as if it did not happen. We might say to ourselves, and sometimes to our apologizing offender, "Oh, just forget it. It didn't matter anyhow." Yet later we find ourselves discussing it with a friend or within ourselves because it really did matter. Though it did happen, with great effort we convince our feelings and our actions that it didn't. We choose *a path that represses our honest reaction*, but repression is not Christian forgiveness. Forgiveness faces the reality of an offense and handles it head on like Jesus who said "forgive them" while on the cross (Luke 23:34), and Joseph who tested his brothers' loyalty after he had forgotten the pain (Genesis 41:51). In contrast, repression is not honest with reality and it has a way of not respecting our true feelings. We try to tell ourselves that we shouldn't feel hurt and angry, or even that we deserved the injustice. We do our best to ignore the event and its results. While this calms our reactions, it degrades our judgment of ourselves, and our observations. In the process, our choice to repress steals life: from ourselves and from others whom we love. It undermines our self-respect and allows the offense to keep on hurting us.

Another way to travel though life after being hurt by another is to *carry a load of resentment.* This path, despite its obvious burden, has its appeal, at least, in contrast to repression. Private resentment appears to allow us to keep our self-respect, because we can believe we never deserved the hurt, and we can know the other person acted terribly in hurting us so unjustly. But, does it really keep our self-respect? Don't we, and our loved ones, get weary of the effect of this burden on the enjoyment of life? It is cancerous to our spirit. Moreover, unresolved resentment has been shown to correlate with physical pains and illnesses (**Anger Kills**, Williams and Williams, 1993). Jane, a single mother of three, harbored resentment toward her unfaithful ex-husband for more than a decade. She experienced headaches, exhaustion, and disruption in her relationships with her children. After an extreme crisis of anxiety, she finally realized she needed better freedom from the past, to overcome the physical, and also emotional, pains. When we are honest with ourselves and, like Jane, realize the effects of resentment, we feel degraded to have allowed our offender to continue to hurt us long after the initiating painful event.

A third path to take to deal with unjust pain is *the path of revenge*. Romans 12:19-20 tells us "Do not take revenge my friends," but, on the contrary, do good because in doing so we "will heap burning coals" on our enemy. We might like that last phrase a little too much! It seems to give us 'scriptural' permission to seek revenge. Our minds are thinking, "now let me show you just how corrupt or inept you are," as we smother our offender with kindness. It's our way of making their egos suffer—of making them look bad to themselves, and to others who know how offensive they were. It's still revenge. Revengeful acts always tempt us into believing we will feel better when the offender suffers.

This cleverly deceitful temptation covers the reality that revenge does not eliminate our continued suffering and it is never just. We cannot "get even." Only God is so good as to know how to exact justice. A wife whose husband forgets her birthday may decide to get even by ignoring him on his birthday. Instead of justice being served, the scales balanced, and the relationship readied for reconciliation; the pain has increased, offensive stakes have been driven deeper, and reconciliation is tougher.

We may think revenge protects our self-respect. After all, justice needs to be served for the unfair pain given us. But, does our revenge serve justice? More personally, does revenge convince us we are more respectable, more honorable, and of stronger character, when we respond in like kind to our offender? I think not, when we are honest; and when we are dishonest with ourselves, we certainly do not treat ourselves with respect. In reality we must admit that our revengeful actions are of the same ilk as our offender's. They are degrading for human beings created in the image of God. We also know that revenge simply lengthens the chain of pain, of which we were the preceding link. We allow the pain of our offender's unjust action to continue into the future.

Each of these three choices continues the effect of the pain of a significant hurt into the future just like three lanes on the same road heading toward a destructive destiny. We may change lanes along the way, but we still end at the same place—pain. Each route perpetuates the pain.

Studies have shown that people who come from dysfunctional, painful, or abusive childhoods have greater potential to practice unsuitable behaviors themselves (**Parenting, An Ecological Perspective**, Luster and Okagaki, ed., 1992). Children of alcoholic parents have greater potential to become alcoholics; children of abusive parents have greater potential to exploit others; and children of divorced parents have greater potential to have troubled relationships themselves. To end the chain of pain, we, the offended, must choose a path that absorbs the pain and lets it go. This choice is fair to our, and our children's, future.

Peter tells us that "When they hurled their insults at him [Jesus], he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:21-24). Jesus died to end the chain of pain and to begin a perpetuation of love. He bore the pain of our unjust acts so that we might no longer follow the path of destructive sin to death, but that we might live on the road of righteousness that leads to life. He absorbed the injustice so that it might end with Him.

We are called to follow in His steps. When we have been painfully offended, we must change paths from the destructive responses of repression, resentment and revenge to a route that relieves the pain and restores righteousness. As Faulkner relates, we must become the transitional person (**Making Things Right When Things Go Wrong**, 1986) . This is the *route toward forgiveness*. Forgiveness, through faith in God's justice, faces the reality of the offense, absorbs the pain and lets it go. Forgiveness eliminates hate.

Of the choices of where to go after a painful offense, forgiveness is the choice of self-respect. Forgiveness recognizes the act for what it is in all its unfairness to us as persons worthy of fair treatment. Forgiveness does not respond in kind to the offender, but offers love instead. Forgiveness does not allow the offense, and hence the offender, to continue to harm us, but it frees us from the painful past. Forgiveness is fair to the future. Forgiveness is in the image of God.

Because we are human, forgiveness is not easy. It is actually a choice to suffer—to nobly stand, to take the pain and to entrust it to God. It is a difficult path to choose in response to a painful offense. With the companionship of God, the path straightens and smooths until the difficulty is relieved and we reach the destination of restoration. In the words of Lewis Smedes, "We reverse the flow of seemingly irreversible history . . . of our own history . . . of our private painful history. We reverse the flow of pain that began in the past when someone hurt us, a flow that filters into our present to wound our memory and poison our future. We heal ourselves" (**Forgive & Forget**, 1984).

Forgiveness

A Lesson From Children

Patti Brecheen Fite

"HE CALLED A LITTLE CHILD AND had him stand among them. And he said, 'I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven'" (Matt. 18:2–4).

Usually, in lessons discussing a need to forgive others, we refer to a sense of being wronged or sinned against, and our subsequent feelings of hurt, anger, and distrust toward someone important to us. Strong feelings of anger or hostility are commonplace by the time we reach adulthood; most adults have experienced several situations requiring difficult forgiveness. Between adults, when hurtful incidents occur often, we tend to distance ourselves and set up boundaries or defenses against further hurt. To some extent, this is a wise practice, taught by psychologists as healthy, and a part of human nature. God seems to have built into our human make-up the motivation to avoid pain.

If we are close to someone who has hurt us, we can probably discuss the incident and choose to be close again. However, what if our attempts to communicate are not successful? Or, what if we are temporarily reconciled but the situation is repeated and we feel taken advantage of?

Forgiveness is sometimes a complex emotional and spiritual process. We learn many Scriptures teaching us to forgive and instructing us to act with patience and kindness. However, I believe we tend to focus upon the outward behavior of forgiveness rather than the inner process that is necessary for true forgiveness to take place.

Forgiveness seems to come more easily for children than for adults. In my work as a school psychologist, I have observed that most children do not display signs of hostility or resentment before second or third grades (ages 7–9). Deep resentment, even at age 10, seems unusual and generally is displayed after some family-based situation over which the child has had no control. Because children have limited experience to make sense of such occurrences, and because they generally haven't learned to talk about their feelings, anger and hurt usually are expressed through play, drawings, and outward behavior such as reactions to frustration.

Except for unusual circumstances, why do children seem to forgive so easily? Matthew 18 begins with Jesus disciples asking Him "who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Jesus responds with strong exhortation to do two things: change, and become like little children.

In verse 4, He instructed them as how to become like a child, that is, "whoever humbles himself." Evidently, the disciples believed they were already among the "great ones" in the kingdom of heaven. They wanted to further limit their prestigious group by finding who was "the greatest." Jesus response was to rebuke their pride: they were warned that they might not have any part in the kingdom if they continued in their present state.

Humility appears to take no effort for most young children. It is just a natural way of being, possibly because they haven't yet developed the sense of self or the sense of pride that can be offended.

Two six-year-olds may be found fighting vehemently one day and happily playing together the next. It may be that having someone to play with is more important to them than preserving pride and playing alone. Children don't seem to need to preserve their pride over a long period, as adults sometimes do.

Young children, also seem naturally unable to hold a grudge. A child's idea of time is the result of a developmental process that is not reached until around ages 8 to 10. The younger the child, the more easily and quickly she seems to forgive and move on. A young child cannot understand someone—parent, teacher, or friend—who is angry with her for something that happened last week or even yesterday.

In Matthew 18:15, Jesus taught the disciples how to treat a brother who "sins against you." The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant begins later, in verse 21. These two teachings follow closely Jesus' exhortation to become like little children in the gospel. The grouping together of these teachings is worth serious consideration and suggests that part of our pursuit of forgiveness involves choosing to humble ourselves.

Beginning in verse 15, Jesus taught persistence in our attempts to be reconciled with a brother who sins against us. He indicated that we are to be the initiators of a renewed relationship with our brother. Because as adults our memory capacity is fully developed, and because we've generally been offended many previous times, forgiveness can be very difficult.

In the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, Jesus told of a man who found himself indebted to his master for an amount of money equivalent to millions in 1994 dollars. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he, his wife, his children, and all that he had, be sold to repay the debt. In his despair, the servant fell on his knees and begged the master to have patience with him, promising to repay him. "The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt, and let him go" (v. 27).

In contrast to how he was treated, the servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him the equivalent of a few dollars. He grabbed him and began to choke him, demanding repayment of the debt. His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged for patience, promising to pay his debt. But the unmerciful servant refused, and instead had the man thrown into prison until he could make payment.

The master's severe judgment upon the wicked servant for his lack of forgiveness is found in Matthew 18:33. "Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had on you?" The servant was turned over to the jailers to be tortured until his reinstated debt could be paid in full.

Jesus' teaching to the disciples in verse 35 was to "forgive your brother from your heart." This sounds like the way a child forgives: deeply and completely, reinstating full privileges of the friendship. Jesus' instructions appear in the language of a command. This means that we can choose to forgive others. The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant reminds us that, because of the enormity of forgiveness that God has already lavished upon us, we must forgive others the small (in comparison) offenses we feel.

David Augsburger, in his book **Caring Enough to Not Forgive** (Regal Books: Ventura, California; 1981), describes a "false forgiveness" which often seems to occur between church members and Christian friends who want to be obedient to God's commands. Unwittingly, we pursue a counterfeit of the "forgiveness from your heart" which Jesus teaches.

Consider these statements reflecting false forgiveness: "It's obviously not my problem, I've forgiven him" (focusing on getting release for ones own conscience). "It's clearly his attitude that separates us, I'm forgiving" (focusing on escape from our own guilt). "There's nothing more I can do than what I've done, he's forgiven" (focusing on freedom from responsibility). Augsburger writes that any view of forgiveness that supports these types of attitudes is too easy, too cheap. "The goal is community restored, not private perfection maintained" (p. 70). Failure to forgive others can lead to deep bitterness that lingers within our hearts, poisoning our spirits and our worship. Choosing to forgive is not human nature, it is God's nature that can be tapped through prayer and willingness to let go of our anger and to become again like little children.

God delights in our opening our hearts to His guidance. He will bless our choosing to humble ourselves like children.

A school psychologist, Patti and her husband, Phil Fite, until recently, lived in Wilmington, NC and worshiped with the Pine Valley church where Phil served as Campus Minister. They now make their home in Houston, Texas. Patti's father is Dr. Carl Brecheen. Contact her at 7803 South Gessner, Houston, TX 77036.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness & Conflict Resolution

By Ross Thomson

"REALITY IS FOR PEOPLE WHO can't handle denial." —J.S. Stamps Face it. There are plenty of things to be angry about in this world. The spectacular examples dominate the newspaper and the six o'clock news, but these stories are no more than the tip of the iceberg of mans inhumanity to man—representing a tiny fraction of the injustice and unfairness that is rife on this planet. Wars and rumors of wars may dominate the media, but these are only the large scale wrongs that confront society. We each face evil every day.

For every Hitler, for every Sadam Hussein, there are many little dictators who callously leave pain and misery in their wake. Such people are not isolated occurrences in human history. Because we tend to "demonize" the Hitlers of this world, we tend to forget that they are drawn from a much larger "talent pool" of wickedness within the general population. For every "celebrity villain" there are a host of less well-known worthies with hearts just as black as their famous brothers and sisters, who, had they the opportunity, might have made names for themselves in the Third Reich. You may be related to one by blood or by marriage. Don't worry. You can admit it. Even the best families have them—people who make others's lives a misery—people who mistreat their spouses, children and friends—yet people with whom we have to interact.

Just thinking about them makes you as mad as a hornet. The injustice of it all fills you with indignation. So, what are you going to do with it? You don't want to stay mad, but you have a hard time resolving your inner turmoil. Some Christian friends tell you, "Just forgive. Just let it go"— as though that were the easiest thing in the world to do. This, unfortunately, leaves you feeling guilty as well as angry. A saccharin smile and a lightweight exhortation, though well meaning, are the last things in the world that most of us need when trying to work through hurt and resentment. "Don't worry; be happy," may look cute on a tee-shirt, but it doesn't do much to resolve your anger and guilt, let alone help you to correct genuine wrongs that need correcting. Forgiveness, like love, is a hard process. Learning the way of the cross is difficult, it takes time and it involves the work of confronting the real situation. There is no virtue in living in denial. Paul didn't think so, and, fortunately, he offers us wise counsel in traveling the road to forgiveness.

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Lesson I: Be Angry

The apostle Paul tells us that anger is not wrong when it is justified and provided we use it to good purpose: "Be angry, but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil" (Eph. 4:26–27).

Anger is a God-given emotion. In fact, a major portion of the Scriptures dealing with anger is referring to God's anger. God is not unmoved by the hatred and unkindness that He sees in this world and neither are we. When we deny anger, we, all too often, suffer from its low-grade cousins, smoldering resentment and frustration, which can poison our lives. "Denial" is no answer to the problem of anger. Thus Paul says, "Its O.K. to be angry at times." Why? Because we have to come to terms with the real situation within our hearts and within the world in which we live. Anger can be a positive motivation to go out and right the world's wrongs. Florence Nightingale was angry about the quality of hospital care. William Carey was angry about the slave trade. Jesus was angry that the temple had been turned into a den of thieves. One can be justly indignant. Anger, in such cases is a stimulus to action.

Lesson II: But Do Not Sin

While it is possible to be angry without sinning, all too often we fail in this regard. While anger is a natural response to a threat (involving even our body chemistry), how we act upon that response determines whether we sin or not. The Bible warns us to be slow to anger. However, once we are angry with good reason we must use that emotion to a good end. We must master our anger or we will be mastered by it. Anger unleashed becomes violent aggressive rage. Anger denied can become smoldering hurt and resentment. Neither situation is good for our souls.

Lesson III: Do Not Let the Sun Go Down On Your Anger

If you are to avoid rage and bitterness, if you are to avoid having anger go to seed, you must deal with the situation. Control the response before it controls you. Be assertive. Notice, I did not say, "Be belligerent." There is a world of difference between belligerence and assertiveness. Jesus Christ was the most assertive person I have ever heard of. The way of the cross was the ultimate act of assertiveness. Jesus stood up to the High Priest, the Sanhedrin, Herod, and the Roman Empire and through it all He never lost control. It was the other guys who blinked, while He stood His ground. One way or another, all the most powerful people were terrified of Him. Jesus was assertive in the face of aggression. So....

Assert yourself. Speak the truth tempered with kindness. Be courageous. "Do not let the sun go down on your anger" means that you seize the initiative. Nothing is more powerful than a man or woman prepared to act with the determination to resolve conflict and to walk the path of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Lesson IV: Give No Opportunity to the Devil

The world is an unfair place. Anger is often the appropriate response. It is not the root problem but rather the result of hurt, fear and frustration. Get to the root cause of your anger, then, take it to God—acknowledge it. Confront the situation that caused it. If you can resolve it, do so. It may not, however, be capable of resolution. If you can't resolve it, at least you have the inner peace that comes from having done all that you could. Even on the cross, you don't have to be powerless. In fact, it is at the cross that another Power is manifest...a power not of yourself.

Forgiveness is no easy matter. It is no easier and no harder than walking the road that Jesus walked. It involves a lifetime of spiritual growth—of learning to put ourselves under God's control as we deal with life and all its dilemmas. But it is found through confronting reality and proactively resolving conflict, not through denial.

Ross Thomson is the pulpit minister for the Brooks Avenue church in Raleigh, NC. He holds the M.Th. from Harding University Graduate School of Religion. Contact him at 700 Brooks Avenue, Raleigh, NC 27607.

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The program will begin at 7:30 P.M. on Friday, October 28 and it will conclude at 3:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 30. There will be a $25/person Registration fee.
(The fee covers overnight lodging for Friday, breakfast and lunch on Saturday, and handout materials for Seminar participants. Make checks to Church Leadership Seminar.)

Prepare the Way

By Richard Poling

WHEN ISAIAH LIVED NEAR THE Euphrates River in Babylon with the Jews that had been deported by Nebuchadnezzar, Jerusalem and most of the fortified cities in Judah lay in ruins. The temple had been destroyed. This was the first time the Israelites had come to know a people and their gods who had defeated Judah utterly. That most ancient enslaved people adopt the religion of their conquerors is common history. The reality of each morning in this heathen land persuaded many Jews that the Babylonian god, Marduk, and his cohorts were alive and prosperous. Yahweh was dead.

Pretend you are in Isaiah's sandals. Look at the enslaved people. Look at the children born there. What would you do? It is truly amazing that the Jews maintained a continuity of ethnic and religious identity. The exilic community found a form and structure in which it could survive. Here was probably the first substantial evidence that the Judaeo-Christian religion would be profoundly different from paganism. Many historians believe the synagogue began in Babylon. It was to fill the need of transition from cultic sacrificial ritual to devotional assemblies.

Spoken from the depths of human existence, the words of Isaiah stand as an example of courageous faith. God is the only reason for the expectation that good things will someday happen for them and their children.

"'Comfort, comfort my people,' says your God. 'Speak kindly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her, that her sentence is served, her penalty is paid, that she has received from Yahweh's hand double for all her sins.' A voice calls: 'Clear a road in the steeps for Yahweh, grade a highway in the desert for our God. Let every valley be filled, and every mountain and hill be leveled; let the ridge become a plain, and the hillocks a prairie'" (Isaiah 40:1–4, Anchor Bible).

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Isaiah's message to those people was to work and to prepare a processional road through the desert for Yahweh to return to Jerusalem and to the holy mount of Zion. The message is the same for us. We must work. We must prepare the way. We must make the way easier for those who will follow behind us. Thank God there was one who listened to Isaiah and prepared the way for Jesus (Matt. 3:3). John the Baptist said, "There is one who will come after me. I am not good enough even to carry his sandals" (Matt. 3:11). The poem, *"The Bridge Builder,"* by Miss Will Allen Dromgoole, beautifully illustrates the significance of preparing the way.

An old man, going a lone highway,
Came, at the evening, cold and gray,
To a chasm, vast, and deep, and wide,
Through which was flowing a sullen tide.
The old man crossed in the twilight dim;
That sullen stream had no fears form him;
But he turned, when he reached the other side,
And built a bridge to span the tide.
"Old man," said a fellow pilgrim near,
"You are wasting strength in building here;
Your journey will end with the ending day;
You never again must pass this way;
You have crossed the chasm, deep and wide—
Why build your bridge at the eventide?"

The builder lifted his old gray head:
"Good friend, in the path I have come," he said,
"There followeth after me today
A youth whose feet must pass this way.
This chasm that has been naught to me
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be.
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;
Good friend, I am building the bridge for him.*"*

Those who believe in God have hope in the future. They labor to build roads and bridges so that others may cross. And why should God's prophets obligate us to the impossible task of filling valleys and leveling hills? Because the God of love cares about people—so do the children of God.

Richard Poling worships with the Grand Strand church of Christ in Surfside Beach, SC.

Christianity on Campus

By Chris Townsend

THE "STATE SCHOOL" IS OFTEN feared as the place where students learn to concentrate on the secular world, eventually shifting their priorities away from God and perhaps losing a relationship with Him altogether. Several campus ministries in the Carolinas and Virginia, however, would challenge these assumptions. These ministries are present on such campuses as Western Carolina, NC State, East Carolina, Clemson, UNC-Wilmington, UNC-Chapel Hill, Duke, Appalachian State, Virginia Tech, Virginia, North Carolina A&T, UNC-Greensboro, and UNC-Charlotte.

I personally feel that I owe my life to the outreach of campus ministry. Through it I became a Christian and the opportunities for spiritual growth and leadership that it afforded have served me well in my service as a campus minister. It was at a college devotional that I met my wife, Angela.

Our campus ministries offer many opportunities for spiritual growth that are provided through devotionals, Bible studies, service activities, and fellowship. Students are trained for leadership and to be actively involved in congregations where they attend when their college days are over.

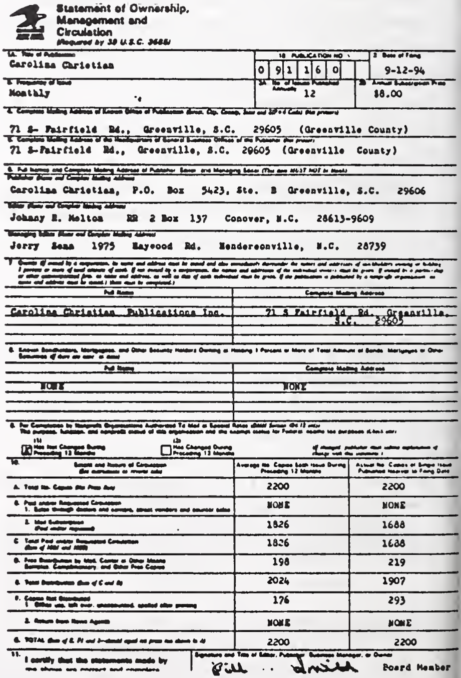
Other than the usual times the whole congregation meets, students can visit nursing homes one night, participate in a campus devotional the next. I know that students in our own ministry at Appalachian State often get together outside planned activities just to enjoy good Christian fellowship.

Twice a year campus ministries get together for retreats. These provide wonderful opportunities for growth and fellowship with students from other campus ministries. Buddy Bell, evangelist for the Gateway Church of Christ in Pensacola, Florida, and former campus minister at the University of Alabama, spoke on the theme, "I Will Follow Jesus" at our first retreat held over the Labor Day Weekend at Carolina Bible Camp.

Besides retreats, students have participated in mission efforts and have helped in evangelistic campaigns on campuses. The most recent of these efforts was at Clemson in March 1994. It is our desire to bring the good news of Christ to others.

The best way to describe the aims of Christian campus ministries at state schools is to use a description Jesus himself gave. "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ... Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:14-16).

Chris Townsend, a native of Watauga county, serves as College Minister for the Boone Church of Christ, Boone, NC.



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50th Anniversary Celebration

By Joe Adams

ON SUNDAY, AUGUST 21, THE WEST Innes Street Church in Salisbury began celebrating its 50th year with a homecoming. It was a satisfying and uplifting day for the 170 former and current members and visitors who attended.

Former Elders, Cecil Pinkston, Lillard Russell, Willie Tabor, and Olian Holladay, along with former minister, Ernie Richards, gave encouraging words to the congregation at the 9:30 A.M. session. Former minister Maynard Booher, presented a powerful lesson entitled, "Love One Another" at the worship hour. Following the service the congregation enjoyed a covered-dish lunch and then closed the day with a song service and devotional.

The church conducted its first service on October 22, 1944, in a rented hall on West Innes Street, with fifteen people present. In 1948 property was secured and a building erected on North Main Street. Hence, the church was known as the North Main Street Church of Christ. Through the years, with the Lord's blessing, the church grew until additional room was needed. Property was purchased and a new building was constructed on West Innes Street. The church has been meeting at this site since October 9, 1977.

The West Innes congregation is striving to not dwell on past problems, failures, or even successes, but to focus on Jesus and to allow Him to guide and empower it to fulfill His purposes.

West Innes seeks the prayers of brothers and sisters in the Carolinas to the end that it may be and may do what God desires.

Brotherhood News

By Michael Mobley

COLUMBIA, SC...The St. Andrews congregation collected an offering of $5,691 for the flood relief work being done by the Williams Road church in Americus, GA. SPARTANBURG, SC...The Central Church announces that it will be celebrating its 50th Anniversary with a homecoming on October 9. For information, call the church at 803/582-7453. All former members are invited to attend. GREER, SC...The church in Greer will be hosting the Third Annual Palmetto Biblical Studies, October 9–13 with the theme: *God Hath Spoken—A Study of Hebrews 1–6*. For additional information call 803/877-8951. KNOXVILLE, TN...The White Oak Church of Christ, Chattanooga, TN has established a scholarship fund at East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions. On July 24 the congregation presented a check for $40,000 to start the endowment. For more information, yon may contact David Pharr, Director, ETSOPM, 6608 Beaver Ridge Road, Knoxville, TN 37931-3499. You may also call the school at 615/691-7411. HICKORY, NC...The Hickory church will celebrate its 50th Anniversary on October 15. Clay Henderson, a former minister, will speak at the Homecoming service. WILMINGTON, NC...The Pine Valley church announces that Jimmy Shaw is their new pulpit minister. Jimmy and his wife Angela come to Pine Valley via Harding University Graduate School of Religion in Memphis, TN where Jimmy has been pursuing graduate studies.

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Studies in Matthew

Carolina Christian

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Matthew's Gospel

By Jim Mullican*

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO Matthew is where most people begin their study of the New Testament. It is the longest of the four gospels, and many feel it is the most Jewish. There is some evidence that it may have been originally written in Hebrew or Aramaic, which had largely replaced Hebrew as the language of the Jews after the Babylonian captivity. Irenaeus, Origen, and Papias, three early Christians who lived in the first through the third centuries, attested to this. Matthew is also very concerned to show how Jesus fulfilled various Old Testament prophecies. A thorough study of Matthew would require years. This writer once preached a series of sermons based on the Sermon on the Mount, and that series covered thirty weeks!

Consequently, while this issue deals with the Gospel of Matthew, it obviously touches on only a few issues, and primarily these are issues found in the Sermon on the Mount. Some of the writers are making their first appearance on the pages of ***Carolina Christian***. Most are preachers in the mountains of western North Carolina. One is a young man who plans to become a preacher. Each was asked to write on a specific passage of Matthew, and was largely given a free hand in what he chose to write. I have done little editing, except for minor changes in grammar and punctuation.

These men have made some excellent and relevant points, and I commend their articles to you.

The Successful Pursuit of Happiness

What does it take to make us happy? When we are children, we think we'll be happy when we grow up and can run our own lives. Young people often think they'll be happy if only they can date or marry a certain person. As adults, we sometimes think we'll be happy once we become financially secure, when the children are grown, or when we can retire. Ultimately, the elderly may look forward to death as a last hope for escaping a lifetime of unhappiness.

Jesus warned, "Take heed and beware of all covetousness; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions"(Luke 12:15, RSV). Jesus taught that happiness lies elsewhere. It is to be found in a right relationship with God. He said, "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:10,11).

Man has always wanted genuine joy and happiness. The entire book of Ecclesiastes deals with that quest. The writer says he sought happiness in wealth, power, women, education, building, gardening, and many other things, but found it all to be empty vanity. He concludes his long quest by stating, "The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole of man" (Eccles. 12:13).

Both Blessed and Happy

As Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount, He grabs the attention of His audience by focusing on this basic, common desire. Whether Eskimos in the frozen north, tribesmen in the African jungle, Americans driving down an Interstate Highway, or first-century Jews sitting on a hillside in Galilee, everyone wants the key to happiness, and Jesus begins by offering that key, although few have ever used it.

We call these nine sayings "the Beatitudes." This is derived from the word used in the Latin translation, BEATUS, which means "blessed." However, Matthew is written in Greek, and he uses the Greek word, MAKARIOS, which means both "blessed" and

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"happy." These two concepts should naturally go together, but they don't always. As Americans, we are generally blessed with material possessions, as well as freedoms, and a government which we are free to change each time we vote. Yet, many Americans are very unhappy, as shown by statistics on divorce, drug use, alcoholism, and suicide. However, a person blessed by God should be happy, and a genuinely happy person is truly blessed. J. B. Phillips translates these verses with "How happy..." rather than "Blessed..."

One thing Jesus clearly shows is that happiness is not to be found in external circumstances but rather is determined by what is inside us—by our attitudes. Two children were asked what they wanted for Christmas. One named several toys, but the other said, "I want whatever I get." It is not difficult to see which one was going to be happier on Christmas morning. Because he had learned this lesson, Paul wrote from Rome while a prisoner, "I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content" (Phil. 4:11).

Poor in Spirit

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3). Jesus is not talking about material poverty, even though riches can become a stumbling block. He is not speaking of one whose spirituality is poor and is therefore largely uninterested in spiritual things. Nor is he referring to a kind of assumed humility, in which certain brethren have taken great pride in trying to seem more humble than someone else. They decline to teach on the grounds that someone else could do it better. They refuse to serve as elders or deacons on the grounds of not being "good enough." They appear to say, "I can be more humble than you!"

Perhaps the best picture of "poor in spirit" is seen in Luke 18:9–14, in the attitude of the publican whom Jesus commended while condemning the Pharisee who took pride in his good works. It is a recognition of one's total dependence on God, reflected in Paul's statement: "I can do all things in him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13).

The one who is poor in spirit recognizes that it is only by the grace of God that he has escaped the destruction he deserves. The famous English preacher, George Whitefield, on seeing a criminal being led away to the gallows, commented to his friend, "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

Paul reminds us in Ephesians 2:8,9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast." In a survey of Christians conducted when I was a graduate student, I found that forty-one per cent did not agree with that statement when it was printed without the Scripture reference. One lady who had been a Christian many years said, "I think we earn our salvation by the way we live each day." These responses would seem to indicate that works have too often been stressed without equal emphasis being placed on grace. To be poor in spirit leaves no room for spiritual pride, arrogance or looking down on those who may not yet have attained to the same level of maturity we have reached. This will do much to relieve the stress in our relationships with others which can make us unhappy.

The thrust of this beatitude is, "Happy are those who recognize their need for God, because they will accept him as King of their lives."

Mourning and Comfort

"Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:4) At first this may seem inconsistent. How can those who mourn be happy?

Jesus is not saying that we should be sour and grouchy. The Christian, of all people, has reason to rejoice and be happy, because he is a child of God, but there are things which we should mourn.

One is our own personal unrighteousness. We have often failed to live up to the standard of Jesus, and in our failures we have hurt God and other people.

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We should also mourn the general atmosphere of sin in the world—the selfishness, cruelty, dishonesty, and lack of trust. The prophet Isaiah reflected both of these attitudes when God called him to be a prophet. He said, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (Isa. 6:5).

In Luke 19:41,42, Jesus wept over Jerusalem, because the sins of pride, stubbornness, and complacency had closed the eyes of most people to God's will. When "Jesus wept" (John 11:35), He may have wept for what sin had done to the human race.

The mourning which Jesus has in mind is an attitude of penitent prayer, of seeing sin for what it is and does, and of mourning for what might have been if humanity had not given in to sin.

The Meek Will Inherit

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt 5:5). This beatitude is one which few have been willing to put to the test. This is a principle seen in the natural world. The fierce, aggressive animals are the ones being destroyed. Wolves, grizzly bears, lions, and tigers are killed because they pose a threat, while gentle animals such as birds, rabbits, squirrels, and house cats seem to be in no danger. Among nations, the aggressive eventually suffer defeat and sometimes extinction.

Meekness is not weakness, but strength which is kept under restraint. Jesus is the prime example. As he told Peter in Matthew 26:53, he could have called twelve legions of angels to defend Him against His enemies, but He exercised restraint in order to accomplish the will of God.

In the same way, meekness is seen when a Christian fails to be insulted by a slight, and refrains from speaking when the words would hurt another. Far from being weakness, meekness requires great strength. It is much easier to retaliate then to overlook an insult.

The meek, self-controlled person will usually be recognized in the business world, and will be successful as a result of his or her ability to not be swept away by emotions. It is certainly the meek whom God can use most effectively in His kingdom.

The Hungry and Thirsty

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matt. 5:6). Most of us have never known real hunger—the kind that would cause a man to eat spiders, rats, and snakes, as some prisoners-of-war in Viet Nam reported they did. In 2 Kings 6:24–31, Scripture records people paying more than a week's pay for a cup of dove's dung, and five months' pay for the head of a donkey. Revolting as this may sound to us, it illustrates the intensity of real hunger.

Those who truly hunger and thirst for righteousness will not allow petty things to interfere. If I drop an item of food on the floor, I throw it away because it is dirty, but if I were starving and there was nothing else to eat, I would not let a few grains of sand or a little dust stop me.

If I really hunger and thirst for righteousness, I will not let a few drops of rain, a headache, company, fatigue, or hypocrites keep me away from the opportunity to worship God and study His word.

God, it seem to me, always opens the door of opportunity to those who truly hunger and thirst to know His will and to obey it. Acts 10:1–8 tells how He made it possible for just such a man, Cornelius, to find the salvation he sought. I marvel at the providential hand of God as He has leads equally sincere seekers of truth to our doors. Truly, our Father is working still, sometimes in spite of our failures.

Jesus said, "Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Luke 11:9). He promises that those who truly hunger and thirst for righteousness will be allowed to find it.

Mercy

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. 5:7). This is a specific application of the general biblical principal that

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we reap what we sow (Gal. 6:7,8; Matt. 6:14,15; 7:1,2; 25:34–40).

What is mercy? It is an attitude of sympathy and compassion toward someone who is in need, and motivates action to relieve that need. It is demonstrated by the good Samaritan (Luke 10:29–37). It visualizes oneself in that predicament. Mercy looks only at the need, not the causes, and acts accordingly. Showing mercy may involve providing material assistance, forgiveness, encouragement, or a listening ear to one who has alienated others. To show mercy is to give what is needed, not what is deserved.

Purity

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). The story is told of a woman who watched her neighbor hanging clothes on the line. They were all dirty and dingy, and she decided to go out and tell the neighbor that she should be ashamed to hang out such dirty clothes. Stepping out onto the porch, she realized that the clothes no longer looked dirty, and she discovered that the dirt was all on her own windows.

The condition of the window through which we look determines to a large extent what we see. Jesus said, "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is not sound, your whole body will be full of darkness" (Matt. 6:22,23).

As human beings, we tend to judge others by ourselves, and to assume they are motivated by the same desires and goals we are. A woman who always suspected others of immorality did so because she had been deeply involved in immorality. The husband who does not trust his wife may be revealing more about himself than about her. Paul wrote. "To the pure, all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure; their very minds and consciences are corrupted" (Titus 1:15).

Children retort, "It takes one to know one." Only by focusing ourselves on that which is good and right and pure can we truly have fellowship with God both here and in eternity.

Peacemakers

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matt. 5:9). Few people are ever in a position to influence the war or peace of nations, but all have the opportunity to promote peace among individuals. Jesus does not pronounce His blessing on the peaceful or the peace-loving, but on the peacemakers. This is a call for active involvement to bring about peace.

A peacemaker may need to be a compromiser, but he must never compromise truth. Most sources of discord are matters of opinion and personal taste, areas where compromise can and should be used. Disputes often involve personality clashes and call for an extra amount of Christian love and forbearance. Under no circumstances are we free to compromise biblical truth, but we need to be very careful to distinguish between biblical truth and personal opinion.

A peacemaker cannot afford to be easily offended. Some seem to almost seek an occasion to become angry, but Paul warns, "Have nothing to do with stupid, senseless controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, forbearing, correcting his opponents with gentleness" {2 Tim. 2:23–25). In our zeal to "contend for the faith," we may be quick to become involved in controversies. We cannot afford to let such things divert us from telling the lost about Jesus.

Romans 14:19 says, "Let us then pursue what makes for peace and mutual up-building." Our goal is not to alienate people and further divide the church of Christ, but rather to draw people together in peace and love, while remaining true to the constraints of the New Testament pattern. The peacemaker must exhibit humility rather than pride, love and generosity rather than selfishness, a willingness to overlook personal slights and injuries, and a willingness to look at things from another person's point of view. Anytime there is division in the body of Christ, the cause of the gospel is hindered. Therefore those who promote peace are

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those who have the heart of God and will be called sons of God.

Persecution

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matt. 5:10–12).

This passage has sometimes been misinterpreted. Being persecuted is not necessarily proof that one is serving God. Some have been persecuted because they were mean, vicious, and hateful. Still, serving God faithfully will often result in persecution. The world does not generally become upset at lukewarm, half-hearted Christians, so that we should probably be more concerned by a lack of persecution then we are by opposition.

Persecution can take various forms. It may be physical persecution, such as the imprisonments and executions which early Christians suffered. It may be economic. A number of years ago, a Christian family moved to a state where all their neighbors belonged to a particular denomination and found that the local grocery store would not sell to them, forcing them to drive sixty miles to buy food. This was because they had declined invitations to become members of that dominant religion, and insisted on worshipping with the church of Christ in that city sixty miles away. Verbal persecution, or slander, can be a third form, and is difficult to deal with. Those who practice such methods need to remember that in so doing, they set themselves against God.

Revelation 12:10 identifies Satan as "the accuser of our brethren." Those who devote themselves to accusing our brethren today need to think carefully about whose side they have actually chosen to serve on. Persecution from those who claim to be Christians can be some of the ugliest kind, but as Jesus made clear when He asked, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9:4), any slander against God's people is taken personally by Jesus.

If we desire to have happy lives, and to be blessed by God, we need to do our best to live by the teachings of Jesus, and especially these beatitudes.

Guest Editor. Jim Mullican serves the Central Haywood Church as both preacher and elder. In addition, he serves on the Board Of Directors of Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., and as Associate Editor of* ***Carolina Christian**.*

Studies in Matthew

A City on a Hill...Letting Our Light Shine in a World Seeking Darkness

By Jim Hunter

SOMEWHERE ON A REMOTE MOUNtain that could be seen from the shores of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus moves away from the multitude of people that had come to see, to hear, to touch, or to be healed by this "miracle worker." Among the many words and utterances of wisdom flowing from the lips of the Son of God that day, Jesus reminds His followers: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:14–16). Those who had come so far were anxious to learn of Him.

Indeed, we live in a world seeking darkness! Jesus said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:" (Matt. 7:13). In reference to the enormity of the darkness of sin, the beloved apostle John penned, "the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19). The Lord revealed to the apostle Paul that his mission was to travel to the Gentile world and "open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light" (Acts

26:28). The "world" Jesus refers to is not just the material world in which we live, but it is the moral and spiritual standard that is in opposition to God and therefore alienated from God. Rather than being influenced by those in opposition to God and thus walking in darkness, Jesus encourages His people to stand opposed to the standards that alienate by remembering who we are. We are "the light of the world!" Don't hide the light! Don't deny the light! Let it shine! Light dispels the darkness. How do God's people let their light shine in a world seeking darkness?

The people of the world are constantly pressuring us to be like them. They do not want to be right; they do not want to do right; they do not want anyone putting them down or putting them to shame by doing right. They harass, ridicule, denounce, curse and sometimes inflict bodily injury in their attempt to make God's people conform to their standards. Paul reminds us in Romans 12:2 that we are not to be "conformed" or "fashioned" by the world, and therefore must resist every pressure to be like the world. God's people cannot afford to allow those walking in darkness to determine their talk, their dress, what to do for recreation, how to spend their money, etc. We have a risen Savior that became our Lord, our Ruler. Jesus sets our standards.

Although, Christians live in a world seeking darkness, Jesus does not expect them to live in a monastic style of life. The Bible plainly teaches that the Christian is to live a distinctive life. In Matthew 5:14–16 there is nothing to indicate that Jesus intended the Christian to remove himself from the problems of society but rather to allow the light of God's Son to shine on the problem. Jesus said, "Go into all the world and teach" (Mark 16:15, Matt. 28:19). On yet another occasion Jesus said, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (John 17:18). Jesus reminds the Christian that by letting his light shine, he can face the darkness of the world in confidence.

We can look only to Jesus as our standard in helping shape our thinking and to reshape the thinking of the world. When we think like Jesus, we can then live our lives confident of the moral ethics that we practice. We cannot look to our government and the average citizen of our land to set our standards. We cannot trust modern theologians because of the lack of respect which they have for the authority of the Bible. Many deny the virgin birth, miracles and the doctrine of hell. The solution to the world in darkness is light. That light is Jesus and Jesus must shine forth from every Christian! People need to return to the basic fundamental concept of integrity which Jesus teaches. We need to return to a belief in the sanctity of marriage and the love which God demands Christians have one for the other.

Long ago King David said to his son, "I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man; and keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his way, to keep his statues, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself" (1 Kings 2:2,3). What a tremendous challenge David gave to his son Solomon! The expressions "to be strong" and "to be a man" did not mean physical strength, but spiritual. David reminded his son that the way to accomplish the huge tasks before him was to "walk" in the way of God and keep His commandments. Jesus reminds us in Matthew 5:14–16, "Ye are the light of the world...let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Dispel the darkness of the world! Don't hide your light! Let your light shine by doing good works, living the godly life. This proclaims the life of Jesus. And because of letting our lights shine, others may be brought into the fellowship of Christ to glorify God.

There is a story about a man passing a coal mine one morning, and seeing a number of mules in the field he asked why the animals were not being used. The reply was, "These mules work in the mine all week. If they were not brought up at least for one day, they would go blind." Christians are to provide that "one day" of light for those who may not otherwise see the light during the rest of the week. As we associate with others on a daily basis, we may be their only "one day" of light. God's people are to let their light shine by their works of righteousness and so bring glory to their heavenly Father. As followers of Christ, let's be determined to do what Jesus would do, think as

Jesus would think, act as Jesus would act. "Let your light so shine" in a world seeking darkness that our God may be glorified! God's children must remember who they are.

Jim Hunter has served as preacher for the Biltmore church in Asheville for the past five years, and elsewhere in the Carolinas prior to his work in Asheville. He is held in high esteem by all who know him and his good work. Contact him at P.O. Box 5651, Asheville, NC 28813.

Studies in Matthew

But I Say Unto You...

By Danny Boggs

DRIVING ALONG A COUNTRY ROAD, a teen-ager and his father spotted forgotten treasure in a pasture: a 1957 Chevrolet. With tires flat and cracked, hubcaps missing, the rear window broken out, spots of rust dotting the whole body and a bird nest on the dash, they knew the car had suffered through years of neglect and misuse.

The teen-ager had a vision. His neon yellow '57 Chevy with mag wheels and giant chrome intake valves would prompt "oohs" and "aahs" nationwide as it graced the pages of Hot Rod magazine.

Meanwhile, his father's mind wandered back to childhood and the day his dad drove a brand new 1957 Chevrolet home from the showroom floor. As his mind flooded with memories, he dreamed of restoring this old car to its pristine quality.

While the teen-ager's vision and work might awe the modern crowds, the car's designer would more likely be pleased with the father's careful restoration of his original creation.

Jesus came not to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfill (Matt. 5:17). He, to whom all of the law and the prophets pointed, obeyed the law perfectly and explained what true obedience entailed. He restored to the blurred vision of the world the Designer's intention of His Law. In so doing, He also conveyed the essence of life in the kingdom of God.

God has always pursued people's hearts, for they inspire our actions. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23, ASV). In the sermon on the mount, Jesus explained that righteousness involves attitudes as well as actions. In contrast to Pharisaic "righteousness," Christian righteousness is seated deep in the heart (Matt. 5:20).

Jesus carefully explained His relationship to the Law and Prophets, then launched into a dismantling of common misconceptions about the Law. Repeatedly He referred to what the people had heard and then proclaimed, "But I say unto you!" Some in His audience held to traditions about the Law, rather than to the Law itself. Many of the common people knew the Law only through public readings, readings which were often tainted with injections of inaccurate interpretation. The rabbis restricted certain commands and extended permissions beyond their limits.

Jesus wasted no time quoting rabbis, as did the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus said, "I Say unto you," indicating that He was the very fount of moral law and could speak with the voice and authority of God Himself. When His sermon ended, the crowd was amazed at His authoritative teaching (Matt. 7:28–29).

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"Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment; but I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire" (Matt. 5:21–22).

Almost no one doubts the propriety of the sixth commandment (Exod. 20:13). Yet Jesus here condemns even the motives behind murder. We have all entertained thoughts of envy and anger.

Restraining anger in the heart would work wonders in our society. Anger harbored in the hearts of religious people has resulted in such atrocities as so-called "justifiable homicides" against doctors who perform abortions. While we decry the sinful murder of 1.5 million unborn babies every year, we cannot exonerate those who retaliate in an equally deplorable manner. Jesus never commissioned a hit squad (John 18:36)! Control over thoughts and emotions prevents senseless killings.

Family life can be transformed by heeding Jesus' words. He gave examples of insults aimed at the head and the heart, insults that downgrade intellect and moral character. Such verbal abuse is common in the home, particularly among siblings. Though often spoken in fun, verbal arrows can inflict deep and lasting spiritual wounds.

Even in the church, we stumble over our Lord's mandate. Brothers take offense at what another says or writes and never take the time to go directly to the one by whom they feel offended. Animosity grows, bringing for its holder impending punishment and God's rejection of His worship (Matt. 5:23–26). Jesus here impresses upon us the urgency of reconciliation.

"The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (James 1:20). Remember the Master's teaching about anger and follow His example, "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not" (1 Pet. 2:22).

Jesus continued, "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shall not commit adultery: but I say unto you that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:27–28). Many of us think that we have perfectly obeyed the seventh commandment (Exod. 20:14). Yet Jesus says that sexual purity involves the mind as well as the body. Some members of the Corinthian church were adulterers (1 Cor. 6:9–11). By Jesus' definition, many in the church today still are adulterers!

We must break with the evil at any cost (Matt. 5:29–30). If you are tempted when you go to the beach, don't go to the beach! If you are tempted when watching certain kinds of movies, don't watch those kinds of movies!

The next misconception which Jesus addressed had sparked a great controversy over grounds for divorce. "It was said also, whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, that every one that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery" (Matt. 5:31,32). According to the popular view of the day the "unseemly" thing of Deuteronomy 24:1 applied to any cause for which a man might want a divorce.

When the Pharisees sought to embroil Jesus in the controversy over divorce, He emphasized God's plan for marriage (Matt. 19:3ff). When asked why Moses commanded that a certificate of divorce be given, Jesus declared that fornication is the only legitimate reason for divorce and remarriage (Matt. 19:7ff). God has never commanded or even encouraged divorce! Deuteronomy 24:1–4 is actually God's restriction and discouragement of the people's practice of divorce. Jesus restored God's enduring pattern for the family (cf. Gen. 2:24, Matt. 19:5, Eph. 5:31).

"Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all..." (Matt. 5:33,34). The Jews were well aware of passages that warned against breaking vows made to God and by His name (cf. Exod. 20:7, Lev. 19:12, Num. 30:2, Deut. 23:21–22). Yet, many concluded that God had given them escape hatches from all other oaths.

Jesus emphatically declared, "Swear not at all." God is the ever-present God of truth. When we are not true to our word, we violate the very nature of the God who always knows what we are saying and doing. Jesus said, "Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one" (Matt. 5:37, NIV). Honest men need not resort to oaths in personal communication. When we do, we only confess that we cannot be trusted!

"Ye have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on they right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. 5:38–39). This law, to be administered by the judiciary, was intended to prevent violence (Exod. 21:24, Lev. 24:20, Deut. 19:21). Many Jews had used it to gauge how much revenge was allowed in personal conflicts. According to Jesus, revenge has no place in personal relationships!

"If any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also" (Matt. 5:40). By law a man could be sued for his inner garment but not for his outer garment (Exod. 22:26–27). Yet Jesus maintained we should not be wrapped up in our rights. We should even be ready to provide extra service to those whom we feel deserve no assistance at all (Matt. 5:41–42).

Finally Jesus said, "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you" (Matt. 5:43–44). The commandment to love one's neighbor did not even hint that one should hate his enemies (Lev. 19:18). In the same chapter of Leviticus, the Israelites were commanded to love the strangers among them as themselves (19:34). Spurgeon called "and hate thine enemy" a parasitical growth upon God's law.

By our love men will know that we are Christ's disciples (John 13:34). Love will distinguish us from the world. Our influence will never grow until God's love sweeps through our hearts and out to others.

Clearly, God expects us to be different from the world and even different from other religious people (Matt. 5:20, 45–47). Godly virtue cannot be forced upon us by law, by the environment, or by the church. True righteousness is found in the life completely surrendered to God.

Jesus based His appeal for our hearts on who God is and who He wants us to be (Matt. 5:45,48). We must acknowledge the inadequacies that exist not only in society, but in us. Our aim ought always to be the perfection of our heavenly Father. We can make spectacles of ourselves by offering a crowd-pleasing morality. Or we can be restorers, impressing upon the hearts of men the beauty of genuine New Testament morality that pleases the Designer. Which will we choose?

Danny Boggs is a Freed-Hardeman graduate, and is presently serving as Associate Minister for the Hendersonville church. He is well-grounded in Scripture, and commands the respect of all who know his work. He shows the wisdom and thought of one with many more years of age and experience. He may be contacted at the Hendersonville Church of Christ, 1975 Haywood Road, Hendersonville, NC 28739.

Studies in Matthew

The Danger of Seeking to Please Our Brethren Rather than God

By Harding Lowry

THREE THINGS ARE NECESSARY TO obey the will of God. First, we must do exactly what God commands us to do. Second, we must do what God commands the way He commanded it to be done, if He tells us "how" it is to be done. Third, we must do what God commands, the way He commanded us to do it, and for the exact reason He commanded it to be done.

Sometimes God does not tell us "how" to do the thing commanded. In such cases we are to use our judgment to determine the best way to do what has been commanded. If God tells us "how" to do the things He commanded, then the "how" becomes as much a part of that which is commanded as the command itself.

If God does not tell us the reason why we must do a thing, then the fact that He commanded it is reason enough for doing it. But if God tells us "why" he wants us to do a thing, then we must do the thing commanded for the reason God commanded it.

In Acts 2:38, Peter told the Jews on Pentecost to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. Here Peter tells one what to do—be baptized, and the reason for it—to obtain the remission of sins. In Romans 6:4 and in Acts 8:36 we learn that baptism is a burial in water. So to obey God by being baptized, one must submit to a burial in water for the remission of sins. When one is thus baptized in water for the remission of sins, he has obeyed God—he has done exactly what God said for him to do, the way He said for him to do it, and for the purpose or reason He gave when He commanded baptism—the remission of sins.

In James 1:27, we are instructed to "visit" the fatherless and widows in their affliction. To "visit," here, is not just a social call, but the providing of the needs of the fatherless and widows. We are not instructed here as to "how" we are to provide for such needs. In this case we are free to use our judgment in selecting the very best means possible to provide for the needs of the fatherless and widows.

In Matthew 6, Christ is dealing with three great principles—almsgiving, prayer and fasting. We are to do homage and service to God by prayers with our souls. We are to do homage and service to God by fasting with our bodies. We are to do homage and service to God by almsgiving with our estates. As the disciples would likely be tempted by the power they had to do many wondrous works, they are warned to be on guard against hypocrisy.

The first six verses of the sixth chapter of Matthew along with verses sixteen through eighteen of the same chapter make all of this very clear. Christ said, "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

And now to verses sixteen through eighteen of Matthew six: "Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

Here Christ seems to be more concerned with our motive in almsgiving, prayer and fasting than with "how" we are to carry out these principles. Almsgiving is a great duty in which all disciples are to abound according to their ability. Almsdeeds do not deserve heaven; however, we cannot go to heaven without them. Almsgiving is such a duty as has great rewards here and hereafter attending it—rewards which are lost if they be done in hypocrisy.

In prayer, we have more to do immediately with God than we do in almsgiving. Consequently, we must be more concerned to be sincere when we pray. Two great faults are named here—vain-glory and vain repetition. Here we are more concerned with vain-glory than with vain repetition. We must not aim at the praise and commendations of men, but of God.

These people in Matthew 6 prayed in the synagogues and in the corner of the streets where many people could see and hear them. The fact that they "love" to pray standing in the synagogues and in the street corners reveals their pride in choosing to pray there. But Christ suggested that they enter into their closet, and shut the door. There unobserved, undisturbed and unheard by men, they could pray to the Father in heaven. In secret prayer we give glory to God for his universal presence. We are told such prayers are rewarded openly.

Christ condemned these Jews, not so much for fasting, but for their boasting of it. The hypocrites pretended to fast when there was nothing of that contrition or humiliation of soul in them. Theirs was a mock-fast, the show and shadow without the substance. Such fasting is spiritual wickedness, and brought only the praise and applause of men. When we deny ourselves bodily refreshment, we are to do it so that those nearest us likely will not notice it.

Motive is important in doing anything God has commanded us to do. Some years ago, two men were scheduled to appear on a community artist series in a small county seat. By some mix-up, both men were assigned the same subject—"George Washington." The doorman sitting by one of the doors heard the people, as they left the auditorium following the first lecture, talking about the speaker's choice of words, the use he made of certain phrases, the quality of his voice, and his facial, hand and bodily gestures.

A couple of weeks later the same doorman sat beside the same door as the audience filed out following the second speaker's address, and heard them discuss the greatness of George Washington, the many interests in life that he had, and the many fields of human endeavor in which he had been so successful.

The first speaker used his subject, "George Washington," to sell himself to the audience. The second speaker succeeded in selling his audience on George Washington.

Paul wrote to the Philippians about some who preached the gospel to add to his bonds (Phil. 1:15–17). Paul was glad the gospel was preached even if it meant greater suffering for him. Some honest soul might hear the gospel, believe and obey it, and be saved even though the preacher had a wrong motive for preaching the gospel. Such preachers might lose their eternal rewards because of their motives, but those who obeyed his teaching might be saved eternally.

To the Ephesians Paul wrote that we should preach the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). Our motive in preaching the gospel must always be love—love of God, love of the truth and love of souls that are lost. It must not be to build our reputation or to gain influence in the brotherhood at large. Our motive in obeying God may very well determine where we will spend eternity. If we obey God seeking the praises and commendations of men, then we have our reward in this life, with little to hope for in the next life. But if our motive is to please God and obey His will, then we will have an eternal reward coming to us at the end of this life. What was your motive in becoming a Christian? What is your motive in obeying God as you live the Christian life day by day? Christ was very unhappy with hypocrites in His day on earth. Then, let us obey with humility and sincerity.

Harding Lowry has served as evangelist for the Bryson City church for ten years, and is our "senior" voice in this issue. He is the son of preacher, and something of an expert in the history of the restoration movement. He may be contacted at P.O. Box 163, Bryson City, NC 28713.

Studies in Matthew

Wisdom Described by the Wisest

By Blake Nicholas

ONE OF THE MOST VIVID MEMORIES I have of my early childhood is of a day that I was going with my father to cut timbers from the woods to use in adding stalls to the back of the barn. Daddy was preparing for the work, sharpening his tools on the back porch, and I was watching him. As he finished the axe he hung it over the rail and, turning to something else, said to me, "Don't touch it; it will cut you." I stood there looking at the shiny edge of the axe blade, and just couldn't believe that simply touching it would cut me. I made sure that no one was watching, and reaching up, quickly ran my finger down the edge of the blade. I felt a great sense of accomplishment, until the blood began to ooze from the cut on my finger.

I learned an important lesson that day in obedience. God's word stresses to children, "Obey your parents" (Eph. 6:1), and there are many reasons why. I chose not to believe my dad that day—not to obey—and I suffered because of it. But the lesson that I learned as a child is needed even more when we become adults.

In the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7), Jesus stressed the importance of our attitudes and the need to change our lives to conform to his teachings. He then concluded with the following words: "Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it" (Matt. 7:24–27).

In His closing remarks, Jesus encouraged the listeners to respond to His teachings with the proper attitude and actions, and illustrated true wisdom. Consider three principles that Jesus teaches with the examples of the wise and foolish men.

Those who are truly wise will build on the proper foundation. The initial and most important step in any building project is laying the foundation, and the same is true in living the Christian life. The New Testament describes the foundation of the Christian in several ways. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). Jesus said, "Upon this foundation rock I will build my call-out people" (Matt. 16:18, McCord). The foundation He spoke of was the truth that Peter had just confessed, that He was the Son of God. In our text, the foundation of the Christian is described in still another way.

The proper foundation for the Christian is obedience to the teaching of Jesus. What an important principle for Christians to grasp today! The Lord says that those who are truly wise will see that works are necessary for salvation. Hearing and doing must go hand in hand. In His teachings, Jesus always pointed to works, describing those who would follow Him as those who would have to take up their cross (Matt. 16:24), take His yoke upon them (Matt. 11:29), put their hands to the plow (Luke 9:62), and observe all that He commanded them (Matt. 28:20). I understand that we are saved by the grace of God through faith, and no one can be saved by their own works (Eph. 2:8–9). I also understand that we cannot be saved without works—the works that God through His grace has ordained (Eph. 2:10). Jesus affirms that obedience to His teachings is the essence of the foundation that His disciples must dig deeply to lay (Luke 6:47–48).

If action on our part were not necessary for salvation, then on the day of Pentecost, when asked, "what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37), Peter would have responded, "Nothing!" When Paul asked Jesus on the road to Damascus, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?", Jesus would not have said there were things Paul "must do" if works were not required of us (Acts 9:6). But they are! That's why Peter on the day of Pentecost exhorted them with many words, saying, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40).

A foundation of obedience must be laid before one can be a true follower of Christ. Hebrews 5:12–6:2 voices the disappointment of God with those who are not maturing as Christians. It also outlines for us the foundation that the Christian should develop—"the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptism and of laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment" (Heb. 6:1–2). Paul told Timothy to "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they are good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:17–19). The foundation of the wise is laid by doing good works that Jesus taught.

Destruction awaits those who foolishly refuse to hear and do the teachings of Jesus. The New Testament clearly and consistently teaches that we will be judged by our works. Peter tells us that "the Father...without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work" (1 Pet.

1:17). As John prophesied, he "saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works" (Rev. 20:12–13). Jesus, in addressing seven churches in Asia said to each church, "I know thy works," and either approved of them, or told them how to correct or improve them (Rev. 2–3). John further stated in Revelation 14:13, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow after them."

As a child, when I refused to hear and do what my father said, I cut my finger. As an adult, when I refuse to hear and do what Jesus has said, the suffering and punishment will be eternal.

Our Savior, filled with wisdom by the grace of God (Luke 2:40), with wisdom exceeding Solomon's (Luke 11:31), emphasized the importance of doing what he had commanded. True wisdom is evident in our lives when we submit to the will of God to walk in the works that he has ordained (Eph. 2:10).

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

Blake Nicholas is a graduate of Freed-Hardeman University, and has been serving as preacher in Burnsville for the past two years. The church there is relatively new, but is continuing to grow under Blake's guidance. He may be contacted at 63 Azalea Lane, Burnsville, NC 28714.

Studies in Matthew

The Unmerciful Servant

By Lyle Mullican

MERCY IS A TOPIC THAT CROPS UP again and again throughout the Bible. Jesus often spoke about it. One of his most vivid lessons on this topic was the parable of the "unmerciful servant" (Matt. 18:21–35). Prior to the telling of this parable, Jesus had been teaching his disciples how they should treat a brother who sinned against them. Peter began to wonder how often the brother should be forgiven. The Rabbinic teaching was that forgiveness was only necessary three times. Rabbi Jose ben Jehuda is quoted as saying, "If a man commits an offense once, they forgive him, a second time they forgive him, a third time they forgive him. The fourth time they do not forgive him." Rabbi Jose ben Hanina also said, "He who begs forgiveness from his neighbor must not do so more than three times."

Peter thought he was being generous by doubling the Rabbinic number and adding one for good measure, and he probably expected a compliment from Jesus, instead of the rebuke he received. His mistake was in measuring forgiveness by a human standard rather than by a divine standard. Jesus told Peter not to forgive only seven times, but seventy times seven. This is not to be taken literally, meaning we should keep a record up to 490, but means that we should forgive as often as necessary. As the Bible says, "Take heed to yourselves; if your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him; and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and seven times turns to you and says, 'I repent,' you must forgive him" (Luke 17:3–4, RSV).

The parable Jesus told in reply to Peter's question contains several lessons for us. The amount the servant owed was 10,000 talents. A single talent was 15 years' pay to the average working man. Therefore, the servant owed about $4 billion dollars in today's money. This amount was more than the total revenue of several Roman provinces put together. There was no excuse for a man to owe that kind of money, yet the king forgave the debt in full.

The king had every right to sell the servant and his entire family to pay part of the debt. The law of Moses states, "He shall make restitution; if he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft" (Exod. 22:1). This passage describes the treatment of a thief, and this is what the servant effectively was. He could never have come by this monumental amount of money on his own. Although this was true, the king felt pity at the servant's pleading and not only allowed more time, as the servant requested, but canceled the debt entirely, for the servant could never pay it himself even in a thousand lifetimes.

In the same way, we owe Christ a debt that we as humans can never repay. We must realize that it is only through God's grace that we have a hope of being saved. What exactly do we owe Him? First, we owe our very existence to God, for He created us.

Second, Romans 6:23 says that the penalty for sin has always been death. Since all humans have sinned against God, as we read in Romans 3:23, we all deserve to die. By acting as a human sacrifice for all mankind, Jesus canceled this debt, because we could never pay it ourselves, except by dying. Because of this, we owe Him our existence twice—first for our creation, and secondly for allowing us to live eternally with Him, even though we don't deserve it.

How can this debt be paid? The simple answer is that it can't. What do we have to give to God? Money? He is the one who allows us to earn money and who created the materials it is made of (Mic. 6:6–8). Can we give him our time? Luke 17:10 says that even if we give him our life-long service, we are merely servants who have done no more than our duty. Our debt to God is simply unpayable, and we must realize that it is only through grace that we can be saved—we have done nothing to deserve it ourselves.

Now consider the attitude of the servant once his debt was forgiven. As soon as he left the presence of the king, he met another servant who owed him 100 denarii, worth about $8,000 today. Given a reasonable grace period, this could be repaid, but the man was unwilling to wait. He had his fellow servant thrown into prison until he or one of his relatives could pay the debt. Naturally, the other servants were unhappy with this mistreatment of their friend, and they told the whole story to the king. On hearing this, the king recalled the unmerciful servant and told him that as he had not been forgiving, he would not be forgiven. Jesus said that if we do not forgive our neighbors from the heart here on earth, we will not be forgiven by God when we stand before Him in Judgment. This is echoed throughout the New Testament. Matthew alone contains this message five times. In fact, one of the famous beatitudes is, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. 5:7). The word "forgive," in its various forms, appears in the Bible about one hundred and fourteen times. The Lord must have considered it pretty important to put it in so often!

Are we showing as much mercy to our neighbors as we should? Human nature often causes us to condemn others for the same faults we ourselves are guilty of. The unmerciful servant took his fellow servant by the throat. It was a Greek and Roman custom that a debtor was to be taken by the throat and brought to stand public trial. Thus, when the servant acted in this way, he was making it out to be a matter of principle. It's easy to picture him saying with complete self-righteousness, "Honest people pay their debts on time!" He seemed to forget that he himself had recently been much deeper "in the hole" than this man. We are often guilty of the same thing. What we consider to be terrible sins in others are only minor faults in ourselves. The shortcomings which we judge most harshly in others are often our own most undesirable characteristics (Matt. 7:1–5). In the church, we often leave jobs to be done by "someone else." We expect more of others than we are willing to do ourselves.

Isaiah 1:18 states, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool." The same point is made in 1 John 1:9. John says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Although God is merciful in his judgment and will forgive our sins, as these passages point out, we must also remember that he is just, and will not forgive if we are not willing to forgive others. This does not mean that sin should be taken lightly. The sinner is to be rebuked, and if he repents, he is to be forgiven. Robert Louis Stevenson, the author of famous books including *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*, was in the habit of praying the Lord's Prayer each day in family worship. One day as he came to the words, "Forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors," he stopped and said, "I cannot pray that prayer today." We must guard against repeating empty phrases in prayer, and especially this phrase, when we do not mean it. If we come before God knowing that we are at odds with someone else, we are committing sin ourselves (Matt. 5:23–24).

We also need to keep in mind that although God forgives our sin, there may still be consequences that we have to face as a result of our sin. For example, a tradesman in a certain town discovered that one of his employees had been embezzling from him for years. Although some might have been soft and let the thief off the hook, or would have simply fired him, this man chose a different way. He allowed the employee to be arrested, tried, and sent to prison for his crime. When he was released some years later, his employer was there to greet him with these words: "Your place is open for you. Come back, and we'll start afresh." When the man returned to his home, he discovered that his wages had been paid in full to his wife the entire time of his imprisonment. Although he did suffer the consequences of his sin, the man was forgiven, and allowed to start over. Such is God's forgiveness— "justice tempered with mercy."

Another aspect of God's forgiveness that we should try to echo is the fact that once a sin is forgiven, we are no longer held accountable for it. The word "forgive" literally means to "take away." So it is with sin. If we are sinned against, and the sinner asks for our forgiveness, we should give it freely and not keep reminding him of past sins. The following incident is attributed to Confederate general Robert E. Lee: Just after the Civil War occurred, this country was filled with bitterness, hatred, and resentment. People just couldn't forgive their enemies. One man would seemingly have the greatest cause to hold a grudge, but he was one of the few people big enough to insist on peace. That man was Robert E. Lee. One day, a lady in Lexington, Virginia, where Lee lived after the war, showed him the remains of a once beautiful tree in her yard. All of its limbs had been shot off by Union artillery during a raid. Griping and complaining to General Lee, she said, "See what they did to my tree!" thinking he would share her outrage. After a pause, she was shocked to hear him reply, "Cut it down, dear madam, and forget it!" That's good advice. What's done is done, and we can't change it. Instead of causing harm to ourselves and others by holding a grudge, we should just "cut it down and forget it."

Finally, this parable contains several significant contrasts that we need to keep in mind. Peter was willing to forgive by human standards, but Jesus commands that we forgive to infinity.

Of the two debts, one was a trifle, but the other was of such magnitude that the debtor could never repay it. So it is with the injuries we receive compared to our sins against God. There are the attitudes of the two creditors. The mighty king was willing to forgive an enormous debt, but the lowly servant could not even forgive a little. If God is willing to forgive the greater debt, shouldn't we forgive the lesser? Imagine the things people hold grudges for. We stop speaking to people because they don't call or write us often enough, but how does God feel when we don't talk to Him in prayer as much as we should? We completely shun a person who doesn't meet our personal standards of how a person should act, but does God turn His back on us when we turn our backs on His standards of Christianity? Compared to the magnitude of our sins against God, the injuries we receive on earth are nothing.

The unmerciful servant got into trouble after he was forgiven. Have you been forgiven? If so, how are you using that forgiveness? Are you using it to bring others to Christ and to spread the gospel? Can others see a difference in your lifestyle, or do you only use your forgiveness when it's convenient for you? Does God take first place in your life all the time, or only three or four hours a week? God has granted us a great gift. Be sure that you're using it the way He intended. When we don't, we're stealing from God just as the servant stole from the king. When we're absent from worship, we steal His time. When we don't give as we should, we steal money that should be used in His service. Remember the lesson of the unmerciful servant. Remember the debt we owe Christ, and his mercy and love for us. Remember what happened to the unmerciful servant for his lack of mercy, and more importantly, remember the reward that waits for all of us if we are faithful.

Lyle Mullican is a fourteen-year-old high school sophomore, and this article is the text of a sermon he delivered August 21 for the Central Haywood church. He is seriously considering devoting his life to preaching the gos-

pel. Although as his father, the guest editor, may be slightly prejudiced, it is a hopeful sign for the future of the church that young men are taking the Great Commission seriously. Lyle may be contacted at Rt. 4, Box 30-A, Clyde, NC 28721.

A Tribute to Sam Norman

By Janet S. Watts

Saying goodbye to a friend is one of the hardest things in life to do. We search for words, we reach for answers, we linger in memories, but there comes a time when we must find a way to pay tribute. With pen in hand, and with heaviness of heart, I search my mind to release thoughts to paper that can, in some way, express the love and respect held for the man we called, Big Sam.

He walked through this world larger than life, but with graceful steps. He touched the lives of many through his conviction to God, courage in tribulation, and dedication to life.

We call men heroes who save a life, change the world, or stand against a foe. I would contend that Sam was indeed a hero. He dedicated his life to saving lives for Christ, changing a frown to a smile with a story or gesture, and standing against the foes of the world.

He allowed himself to be a visionary. He strove to learn as well as to teach. He believed that people can change things. He graciously shared his knowledge with all who would be listen.

He believed in young people, and strove to give place to them in this world and to prepare them for the world to come through his teaching, friendship, and commitment to Carolina Bible Camp.

His road was often fraught with physical pain, but he pressed on, assured that in heaven there would be no more suffering and pain.

As I peel back the layers of this man called Big Sam, I find deeply and securely embedded in his heart his family and his friends. He held these treasures tightly and protected them well. He found joy in those he held dear, and he always sought ways to encourage, to guide, and to brighten their lives.

Attempting to define the many aspects of this man, preacher, husband, father, grandfather, businessman, camp director, and broadcaster would be as difficult as roping the wind, so I will simply say that he was my friend. A friend that will be deeply missed, greatly appreciated, and forever loved by all who truly knew him.

Janet Watts knew Sam Norman all of her life. She worshipped with him in the Archdale church and went to camp with him at Carolina Bible Camp. Contact her at 6031 Pleasant Grove Road, Charlotte, NC 28216.

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Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and heav'n and nature sing.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders of His love.

—Issac Watts

Carolina Christian

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Editorial

By Johnny R. Melton

PUNDITS AND POLITICAL ANALYSTS will be discussing the outcome of November 8's elections for weeks, even months to come. The Democratic Party suffered a set back of major proportions. The Republican Party won control of both the House of Representatives and the Senate. The GOP has not controlled the House since 1954. In North Carolina, the House side of the State Legislature will be controlled by the Republicans for the first time since Reconstruction following the Civil War. In South Carolina a Republican governor was elected, and in Tennessee the new governor and both U. S. senators are Republicans, all of this in states that have long been dominated by the Democratic Party on the local and state levels.

The purpose for mentioning the election is not to discuss politics, which is much like discussing the weather, a lot is said without much being altered. Instead of discussing the political implications of the election, I want to make an observation about the language that was used to describe the impact of the election and its implications for biblical interpretation.

News reporters searched for metaphors to express the enormity of losses sustained by the Democrats. One reporter said, as the returns were tabulated, the Democrats "can feel the sand shifting beneath their feet." As the outlook grew bleaker and bleaker for the Democratic hopefuls, that same reporter, giving an up-date on several key races, strengthened her metaphor to" the Democrats must feel the earth shattering beneath their feet." The next day, another on-air personality declared, "What happened to the Democrats was the Texas flood, the California earthquake, and the crash of USAir 427 all rolled into one."

Such graphic metaphors are attempts to describe the significance—the magnitude—of the impact of the election on the political party that has controlled Congress for the past forty years. The use of this kind of language is not new. In fact, it is a component of the apocalyptic writing found in Scripture.

An example of this kind of bold, expressive language is Joel 2:28–32, "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the survivors whom the LORD calls."

The description of the sun turning to darkness and the moon turning to blood, etc., is not to be taken literally. Instead, these cosmic references are graphic metaphors whose purpose is to establish the significance of God breaking into world affairs. Isaiah uses this kind of language to describe the overthrow of the Babylonian Empire by the Medes (Isa. 13:1–22, esp. 9–10). The overthrow of the Babylonians was an earth-shattering, cataclysmic event from a political perspective.

Similar language is found in Matthew 24:29, "Immediately after the distress of those days 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'" This statement is in the context of Jesus' prophesy of the destruction of the temple, an event of epic proportion, which symbolized the overthrow of the Jewish economy.

Peter's use of Joel 2:28–32 did not only involve the language that pertained to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the promise of salvation for "everyone who calls on the name of the LORD," but the apocalyptic references were applicable as well. It is interesting to note that the feast of Pentecost, by the first century, had come to be associated with the giving of the Law of Moses at Mt. Sinai. On that Pentecost day described in Acts 2, as far as redemptive history is concerned, a new world order was inaugurated. The Law of Moses, which contained the terms of the old covenant, was replaced with the Gospel of Christ, which contains the terms of the new covenant.

Perhaps references to the earth moving and to awful disaster in describing the November 8 elections is a bit overblown—time will tell if there is substantive change in government, or if "politics as usual" continues to hold sway in Washington. However, an event of world-changing proportions did take place when Peter proclaimed the Good News of salvation in Christ Jesus in Acts 2, and its significance can never be overstated.

Goodbye, 1994

This issue of ***Carolina Christian*** concludes Volume 36. We are grateful for those who have contributed informative and useful articles for publication during the course of this year. More than that, we appreciate those who have read the magazine faithfully.

Not everyone has agreed with everything that has been published during the course of 1994. But that can be said of every other Volume of the magazine, so it should come as no surprise. If reading ***Carolina Christian*** has stimulated one's thinking and caused one to either reaffirm or reconsider one's position on a particular issue, in light of Scripture, then the magazine's purpose has been accomplished.

The only writing that one should expect to always be right on everything is the Bible, otherwise, one will be sorely disappointed, for all other writing, because it comes from fallible humans, is potentially flawed, either in its composition or its interpretation, and sometimes both! Notice the assertion is not that the only writing one should expect to always *agree* with is the Bible, because in reality, people do not agree with the Bible any more often than they agree with the writings of humans. And in some cases, folks appear to be more committed to what someone has written *about* what the Bible says than to what the Bible *actually* says.

The desire of those who write for this magazine is a fair and honest reading. Not one author would purposefully deviate from sound teaching, and if an article should fall short of that mark, then one should, by all means, refuse its conclusions, and call the short-coming to the author's attention. While it may be the case that Matthew 18's instruction on resolving differences between individuals has to do with private matters only (so that individual confrontation is not required when one disagrees with public teaching), the principle may still be applicable in those cases where one knows the individual thought to be guilty of teaching error, and has the ability to contact him or her.

However, granting that Matthew 18 does not apply, the rule of love set out in 1 Corinthians 13:4–8, does apply: "Love is patient, love is kind. it does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."

The expression "always protects" reminds one of 1 Peter 4:8, "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins." One committed to fulfilling this "royal law" (cf. James 2:8), will seek to protect a brother or sister who has erred in his or her

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communication of the gospel from the consequences of that failure, until such a time as that brother or sister has proved to be unteachable and unrepentant.

"Always trusts" is rendered in the King James, "believeth all things." In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, my mentor and colleague, the late and lamented, Howard Winters wrote, "Always eager to believe the best (Moffett). This does not mean gullible but rather eager to put the best construction on all words, deeds, or dispositions in others. This is the exact opposite of what most of us do: when we have a choice, we usually believe the worst instead of the best. But not so with love" (*Commentary on First Corinthians: Practical and Explanatory*, p.180). Were this rule followed there would be less contention over semantics. We could more easily follow Paul's exhortation to Timothy concerning the elect, "Keep reminding them of these things (i.e., the "trustworthy saying" in verses 11–13, JRM). Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen" (2 Tim. 2:14).

Surely, no one limits 1 Corinthians 13:4–8 to private matters. Another word from Paul has bearing here, as well. "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:1,2). When one teaches anything that deviates from "the pattern of sound teaching" (2 Tim. 1:13) it is appropriate to call it to one's attention. However, commitment to the law of Christ requires that such criticism be rendered "gently," with the critic recognizing that he, too, is susceptible to falling into the same error.

Those who write for ***Carolina Christian*** do so to edify the church. They write at their own expense (no one is paid for writing, or for any other service, for that matter). We pray that our efforts will result in good and not harm being done to cause of Christ in the Carolinas and across the brotherhood.

1995 holds great opportunities for the church in the Carolinas. ***Carolina Christian*** expects to tell the story of those congregations that are "redeeming the time" (Eph. 5:16) by sharing Christ with the lost in their communities. We further expect to present timely and provocative articles that will both instruct and challenge our readers. Our goal is to stimulate a deeper sense of loyalty to Jesus and His people, as well as a heightened sense of responsibility for service in His name.

Churches and individuals can assist us in this mission by sending reports of good works being accomplished, articles about exemplary churches and individuals worthy of imitation, and articles which instruct us in the Word. Above all, pray for us.

Honor to Whom Honor

The Apostle Paul told us to give honor to whom honor is due (Rom. 13:7). In this issue of ***Carolina Christian*** there are two articles which pay tribute to special people. Ken Durham, Jr. has written a tribute to his grandparents Ed and Madge Meixner, of Greenville, SC on the occasion of their 70th wedding anniversary, December 25, 1994. Joe Carter has written a tribute to his parents, Hix (who died last year) and Pauline Carter, stalwarts in the church in Winston-Salem, NC.

The lives of these godly couples serve to call us to commitment, first to Jesus and His church, and then to our own families. Commitment and service are in short supply in society at large; we need all the role models we can find. ***Carolina Christian*** joins in saluting the Meixners and the Carters and we thank God for their lives and influence for good.

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Grace Demands Change

By Lewis C. Forrest, Jr.

GOD'S GRACE IS BEYOND OUR range of comprehension. We can't feel the pain that God feels when we reject His love. Likewise, we can't fathom the gift that He gives so freely when He forgives our rejection and welcomes us back into His presence. Grace is a huge topic, demonstrated throughout the Old and New Testaments. Ultimately, it reaches full bloom in the redemption offered us through Christ Jesus. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, so that we could be reconciled back to God from our sinful alienation.

We see grace extended first to Adam and Eve, and repeatedly to countless individuals and groups who should have been destroyed but were spared. By grace, God gave them a second chance to follow His will. If God had ended the physical lives of Adam and Eve at the garden gate, it would have been just. But instead, He extended grace, allowing them to multiply and perpetuate the human race.

God's grace is the ultimate act of mercy. It's the pardon that exceeds all pardons. It's the gift that cannot be measured. It's the immeasurable, unmerited, unequalled mercy of a loving God who rewards penitent hearts with the ultimate gift of eternal salvation.

There's a lot we don't understand about grace, but the Scriptures teach us some things about it that we can find very practical. Consider the fact that grace enables us to work, teaches us to be self-disciplined, empowers us to be productive in the kingdom, and offers us complete satisfaction.

Enables Work

Paul understood God's grace better than most men, and wanted his readers to grasp the power and beauty of God's concept of unmerited favor. In 1 Corinthians 15:10, he credits his ability to work for the Lord as coming from God's grace. Too often, we turn this around, and think we have to work to receive God's grace. Nothing could be further from the truth. We can't merit God's favor. If we did, it would no longer be grace, because the word "grace" literally means "unmerited favor."

God expects us to work in His vineyard. This work is not to earn our salvation, as salvation is a free gift, given by the grace of God (Eph. 2:8–9). Yet, once we have experienced the free gift, we should get up and go to work in the Lord's kingdom, because of what God's grace has done for us. This is the message Paul is trying to get across to the Corinthians, as well as to the Ephesians, and it is the message that we should learn as well. Paul says that the grace of God that was in him caused him to work harder than all of the other apostles, and yet he fully understood that his work would not earn his salvation.

When you've worked hard in the kingdom, consider the source of your strength. If you've yielded yourself to God, then it's His grace that makes it possible for you to work for His glory. Consider 2 Corinthians 9:8 as Paul assures the brethren that God will do His part in our good works, as we do our part. Grace enables us to work. When we fail to work for God, we deny the gift that was so freely given to us.

Teaches Self-Discipline

I look to Titus 2:12 on a regular basis for encouragement and as a reminder to live a self-disciplined life. Consider this grace that has appeared to all men. It, that is God's grace, "teaches us." Have you ever thought about God's grace as being your teacher? Well, that's exactly what Paul is saying to Titus. God's grace teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age. We learn to deny ungodliness and sinfulness by looking at what God has done for us, so freely redeeming us by His grace.

How often do you have to say "No" to temptations that appear in your path? How frequently do you have to tell Satan to get behind you and out of your way? When you ignore the grace of God in your life, you're setting yourself up for a great fall. You're rejecting the great teacher of self-control and righteous living.

Paul says God's grace teaches us. It teaches us that God is love, and that His love is greater than anything we can imagine. It teaches us that the unmerited favor that God showed to us deserves a self-controlled lifestyle response. It teaches us that to keep on sinning is foolish and fails to recognize the price paid for our redemption. It teaches us to walk upright lives in a crooked world. It teaches us that we can be more than we think we can be. It teaches us to live daily in such a manner that we can truly look forward the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If we're not sure we're ready for Christ to return, that we still have some things we want to finish here, then we're ignoring the lessons of God's grace. What God has in store for those who have been purified is so superior to anything that's here. A desire to cling to this present world and its mortality is to ignore the lessons taught us by the wonderful grace of God. Furthermore, Paul teaches that those who have been purified and taught by grace will be eager to do what is good.

Paul says that the grace of God that was in him caused him to work harder than all of the other apostles, and yet he fully understood that his work would not earn his salvation.

Empowers Productivity

Third, God's grace empowers us to do more than we could ever do by our own strength. Paul said he could do all things through God, who gave him strength (Phil. 4:13). Paul recognized that this strength came from God as an act of grace. As we have been saved by grace, we have been saved to do good works. "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Eph. 2:10).

Christians are by their very nature workers in the kingdom of Christ. In the New Testament church, those who would not work were not to be allowed to eat (1 Thess. 3:10). This was not a soft admonition. It was a hard rule, to be bound on the church for all times. It was given as one way to distinguish between true Christians and impostors. Work is good, and we have been recreated from our worthless sinful selves to be new creatures, God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, prepared well in advance for us to do.

This is serious business. It's the business of the Almighty Creator of the Universe. We often think church work is "busy-work" thought up by the elders and other church leaders. If it's according to the will of God, it's God's work, and when we do it with a willing spirit and positive attitude, we bring glory to God and fulfill our calling to be workers in the everlasting kingdom of Christ.

Satisfies Completely

Finally, God's grace is sufficient to satisfy us completely. Paul suffered from a "thorn in the flesh." We don't know what his ailment was. It doesn't contribute anything to speculate. It's sufficient to stick with the revealed account and the revealed account did not set out to tell us what the ailment was. It simply intended to tell us that when we ask for something and God says no to us, that His grace is sufficient.

God saw Paul's thorn as a weakness, and used it to perfect His power in Paul. He does the same for us if we'll allow Him to work within us. He wants us to work, and He's ready to help us in a powerful way though His grace. When God's power rests on us, our weaknesses seem trivial. We can do His will because of His power within us. His grace is there, helping, teaching, empowering, and enabling.

Conclusion

There's no acceptable excuse a Christian can make for not doing God's will. God makes all things possible if we love Him and are willing to be used for His service. We have not because we ask not. We fail to do because we deny the power of God. We live uncontrolled lives because we ignore the lessons taught by God's grace. Isn't it time we accepted this wonderful gift which we did not and could not ever merit by our own works or goodness? Now is the time to rise up to live productive lives because of the wonderful love that God has shown and continues to show for us.

Lewis C. Forrest, Jr. is a management and training consultant and can be reached at Route 2, Box 490, Ayden, NC 28513. He is active in the church that meets in Greenville, NC.

The Need For Youth Ministry

By Randy Gore

THROUGHOUT THE CAROLINAS, there is a great need for God's people to minister to youth. This geographical area has an abundance of teens who are not Christians, who are not influenced by Christian role models, and who rarely or never hear a message from God's word. Even in the church, many youth who regularly attend worship services are starving for God's love and/or are frustrated that the church does not offer enough Christian activities for them. The sad fact is that many youth, even Christians, who do not have opportunities to regularly fellowship with other teens in a Christian atmosphere, will look for other people to fellowship with, and other types of activities to be involved in.

The church must realize the need for youth ministry and show (not just teach) what God's love is all about. The church should help young people to be interested in worshipping God and help them to be excited about doing it. The church should reach out to non-Christian youth and help younger members to develop the desire to do this. If the church wants young people to be faithful, the church must *show* them that they are important by ministering to them and getting them involved with the Lord's work.

Although some congregations in the Carolinas provide active programs for youth, this type of ministry often does not get the needed priority that it has received in other states. Often the focus of a church's work is the three or four hours a week spent on traditional worship services and classes. However, this is just a small portion of what the church should direct her energy towards. Worshipping God and studying together on Sunday and Wednesday are very important, but no more important than worshipping God, loving one another, and showing the love of Christ to the world all week long. Jesus said, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:35, NASB). If the church plans to wait until people are full-grown adults to help them understand and live according to this principle, we will have more obstacles to overcome in sharing Jesus than we have when we teach children and teenagers.

However, if the church realizes the importance of youth ministry, emphasizes the love of Christ to people at a young age, and demonstrates to young people that Christianity is an active lifestyle to be practiced seven days a week, we will be doing the Lord's work with a "head start." The principle of Proverbs 22:6, "train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it," is applicable to today's youth ministry in the church.

One area of youth ministry is to help young people be more interested in worshipping God. However, most worship services and other church activities, while being aimed at pleasing God, are generally conducted in a manner to satisfy the adults and keep them interested. Think about it. In most churches, adults do practically all of the preaching, almost all of the song leading, most of the public praying, and a lot of the Lord's-table-waiting. Consequently, adults are often going to relate more to most sermons and other items of worship, than youth are. This is not to say that most sermons preached are not relevant to youth, because all scriptural sermons are applicable to everyone; but with adults doing most of the preaching to a mostly adult church, the tendency is to present sermons in an adult way. Neither is this to say that sermons should not be presented with adults in mind, but this is to show to those who preach the need of remembering that there are teens and children in the audience who need to be fed. This is also to show the need of giving younger Christian men opportunities to lead in all areas of worship, and the need to give all young people frequent opportunities to participate in youth devotionals in which they will hear more lessons which specifically deal with living for the Lord as a young person.

When young people spend a week or weekend at a Christian camp or Youth Rally, they experience sermons that deal with their unique time of life which are highly relevant to them. They also experience a week or weekend of singing songs that they highly relate to and identify with. These are two of the reasons that young people come home from such times with a greater zeal for God than usual.

Christian leaders should try to help them be zealous all year by continuing to encourage them to enjoy worshipping God. In praising God, young people should learn to identify with all the scripturally-based songs we sing; but giving them the joy of singing devotional songs, in regular worship services, on a more regular basis, will encourage them to enjoy singing to God with everyone in the church, at all times, whether the song is "Amazing Grace" or "I Will Call Upon The Lord."

The next time "Jesus Loves Me" is led during a worship service, watch how the children who are present "light up" and seem to feel more a part of the worship. Teenagers have the same feeling of acceptance and participation when the songs they sing at camp and Youth Rallies are led. This will also give them a feeling of being valuable to the church, because they probably know these songs better than most adults which will, in turn, give them the opportunity to teach something to the rest of the church as they sing (Col. 3:16).

Adults should also keep in mind that if they expect young people to enjoy and identify with the traditional hymns, they should also be willing to enjoy and identify with the more modern songs of praise. Adults and youth alike should learn the value of flexibility in the song service as everyone fellowships together in praising God.

In evangelism, how much of the efforts in the local church which you attend are aimed towards unsaved teenagers? The youth of the church probably have a greater chance of converting their peers than adults have of converting their peers because young people are developing their attitudes and beliefs at a more rapid pace than adults, who are more likely to be living according to attitudes and beliefs which have already been developed.

Usually, non-Christian young people are generally going to be more open to the church than non-Christian adults. Also, adults usually have other con-cerns which consume their time and interest because they must provide for themselves and their families. Therefore, for the non-Christian adult, his or her career and the desire to spend free-time on relaxation and doing things he or she already enjoys often keeps him or her from being very interested in other activities such as church.

For young people, schoolwork is a priority, but besides that, they do not usually have the heavy responsibility of providing for self and family, and they are looking for activities to take part in and a place to belong. In short, unchurched young people are probably going to be more likely to take part in church activities than unchurched adults.

Providing Christian youth activities on a regular basis, while spiritually energizing the youth who are already in the church, gives saved young people the opportunity to let their unsaved friends experience what the love of God's people is like. This is an excellent chance to teach the Gospel to the lost, and an excellent way to help Christian youth develop this desire to show Christ to others. Also, sometimes the best way to reach adults is through their children. If the church gets young people involved, the parents will occasionally wake up and realize that they need Christ, too.

An active ministry for young people in a church is an invaluable tool in saving souls, developing strong relationships in Jesus Christ, and in helping youth (and parents) be involved with the Lord's worship and work. This will result in loving and mature church leaders in the future.

Adolescence is a period of life when acceptance and the feeling of being a worthwhile person are highly important. The youth in the church today need to know that they are important to the other members, and that they are a major focus of the church's ministry. If the church does not offer guidance and let young people know they are loved and accepted, many youth may look elsewhere for guidance, love, and acceptance. The local church needs to have people who are willing to serve as ministers to youth, who will provide spiritual guidance to these precious young souls. Also, by having the opportunity on a regular basis to participate in Christian activities (such as devotionals, service projects, classes, and fellowship times, in addition to the regular worship services), youth will feel more important to the Lord's work, and they will be more involved in doing the Lord's work.

Some churches have found that having a full-time youth minister has aided in the developing of young people's spiritual lives. While full-time youth ministers are not as common in South Carolina or North Carolina as they are in other southern states, a few churches of Christ in the Carolinas have found it prudent to hire full-time youth ministers. This is an excellent way to encourage young people, and to keep them active in the work of Christ.

In praising God, young people should learn to identify with all the scripturally-based songs we sing; but giving them the joy of singing devotional songs, in regular worship services, on a more regular basis, will encourage them to enjoy singing to God with everyone in the church, at all times, whether the song is "Amazing Grace" or "I Will Call Upon The Lord."

Other churches with active youth ministries have been successful in this area of the Lord's work without securing the services of a full-time youth minister because these churches have volunteers who are willing to contribute much of their time, energy, and love to young people. Regardless of whether or not a church has a full-time minister who focuses on youth *the church should make youth a major focus.*

Examine the types of activities that occur in the church you are a member of. How many of those activities are specifically for the encouragement and edification of young people? When a young person faces a dilemma and needs Christian counsel, how many people are there in the congregation you attend that children and teens feel comfortable talking with? How often do the young people in the local church you are part of get together as a group to serve others in some way? If there is little or no opportunity for the young people where you live to participate in Christian youth activities, why not take on the responsibility of providing such times of fellowship worship and Bible study yourself? You will be blessed as you help them grow closer to the Lord and to each other.

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If there are not any, or not very many adults where you worship who have a rapport with youth, why not show some interest in their lives yourself? You will find yourself becoming a sounding-board to youth when they need guidance, and in so doing, you will be engaged in the work of the Lord.

If you know of a possible service project that would help bring glory to the name of Jesus Christ, organize the youth and help them accept the challenge to accomplish it. You will help them learn the value of serving as you also help them feel that they are important enough to do the work of the church in your community.

God has always made young people a priority whether He was ministering to them or using them to do great things to further His cause. Think of David, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-Nego, Joseph, Timothy, and young Jesus. God used them to do great things for Him.

Read Mark 10:13-16 and think of how important ministering to children was to Jesus. Then think of the youth who are in the church you attend and the youth in your community who are not Christians, and determine if the church is giving youth ministry the priority it should have. If the church is making youth ministry a priority, praise God for it, and do what you can to help. If the church is not making youth ministry a priority, do something about it.

The need for youth ministry exists in all churches whether the congregation has no youth or hundreds of youth. The church has a responsibility to help Christian young people grow spiritually, and a responsibility to reach out to non-Christian young people. As Christ's church, may we open our eyes to see the need, and carry out the work of youth ministry which God has prepared for us to do (Eph. 2:10).

Randy Gore grew up in Columbia, SC. He is the youth minister for the Whiskey Road church in Aiken, SC. Contact him at 2006 Whiskey Road, Aiken, SC 29802.

Three Score and Ten...Together A Tribute to Ed and Madge Meixner

By Ken Durham, Jr.

CHRISTMAS DAY, 1924, ST. MARYS, West Virginia: The day dawned crisp and cold in the little town on the banks of the Ohio River. The previous day's snow crackled under the car tires as a lanky, nervous, young engineer's clerk made his way to the old Dewey Avenue Church of Christ building. That Christmas morning Ed Meixner would make his vows of devotion with the two great loves of his life. First he confessed his faith in Jesus and was baptized into Christ by T. Q. Martin, the minister. Then, as quickly as he could dry off and change back into his best suit, he and Madge Clovis were married, again by T. Q. Martin. The groom was 6'2"; the bride was barely 5' tall.

Christmas Day, 1994, Greenville, South Carolina: Ed and Madge Meixner, now 95 and 94 years old respectively, will celebrate seven decades of Christian marriage and service together. Their extended and extraordinary legacy of kingdom leadership and service—as builders of congregations and of Christians, as facilitators of evangelism and of Christian education—is a grand story of faith, hope and love.

When John Edward Meixner was born on June 10, 1899, William McKinley was president of the United States, aspirin had been recently introduced, and Americans were drinking a new beverage called Coca-Cola. A three-bedroom home went for about $2000, the first Ford automobile was about to be marketed, and Wilbur and Orville Wright had not yet left the ground at Kitty Hawk, NC.

Ed Meixner grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, attending the German Evangelical Lutheran Church as a boy. As a teenager he enlisted in the Marine Corps and served his country through the duration of World War I. Following the war, while working as a clerk and part-time college student, he travelled to St. Marys, W.V., to visit his sister and her husband. They had no room for their guest but had friends, the Clovis family, who were renowned for their Christian hospitality. W. E. Clovis, the former town sheriff, was the local Ford dealer and an elder at the Church of Christ. It was during Ed's visit that his eye fell upon the Clovis's petite and quick-witted daughter Madge.

Ed and Madge Meixner

Madge Clovis Meixner born on April 4, 1900, in Pleasants County (Nine Mile), WV, the oldest child of William and Mary Angela Clovis. Her maternal grandfather was George Washington Varner (1839–1921), who, for over sixty years, preached in and helped establish Churches of Christ in West Virginia, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Her father, William E. Clovis, had established Clovis Motors, which today is one of the oldest continuously-owned, family-owned car dealers in the country. He was for over thirty-five years an elder of the Dewey Avenue Church of Christ.

Madge was teaching elementary children in St. Marys when Ed Meixner came to visit his sister, and found himself captivated with the lovely little schoolteacher with "something different about her." Soon he was making regular three-hour trips on the B & O Railroad from Pittsburgh to St. Marys. For two years they courted, and studied the Bible, until Ed became firmly convinced both of the wisdom of being immersed and of proposing marriage to Madge Clovis. Ed and Madge were actually forced to live apart for the first several months following their wedding. While Madge fulfilled her teaching assignment in Morgantown, W.V., they endured what they called their "post-marriage dating time," consisting of weekend visits in her cousin's parlor in Morgantown. In time the Meixners made their home in Pittsburgh. Ed became a specialist in workmen's compensation, with U. S. Casualty Insurance and for the last 24 years of his professional career with the Laundry Owner's Mutual Liability Insurance Association of Pittsburgh.

The history of the Churches of Christ in the Pittsburgh area could not be written without conspicuous mention of Ed and Madge Meixner. Their home at 9 Elton Avenue served as a haven of Christian hospitality, rest and encouragement to all manner of guests: lonely students, poor young couples, on-the-road salesmen, and countless ministers and other pilgrims in the Iron City area. Their visitors over the years included C. E. McGaughey, Don Morris, Foy E. Wallace, Jr., George Benson, Jim Bill McInteer, and major league pitcher Lindy McDaniel.

Ed served as an elder in Pittsburgh for 34 years. During that time he and Madge helped raise funds for and construct the permanent facility for the 5th and Beechwood congregation, which opened its doors in the spring of 1952. Fifth and Beechwood helped establish at least four other congregations in the greater Pittsburgh area, largely as a result of the "Operation Pittsburgh" project led by Don Gardner.

Madge was a beloved fixture for twenty years as the Ladies Bible Class teacher at 5th and Beechwood. No one knew or taught the Old Testament better than Madge Meixner. She authored several articles for *The Christian Woman*. Lifelong supporters of Christian education, she and Ed played a significant role in the founding of Northeastern Christian Junior College in Villanova, PA. In 1956 Ed was asked to serve on its first Board of Trustees, a position he maintained for ten years.

Ed's gift of writing and sense of history made him a valuable resource to local congregations and church historians alike. A meticulous record-keeper, he chronicled key church events and milestones wherever he lived. In 1972 he published *A Limited History of the Church of Christ in Western Pennsylvania*, and later wrote *A History of the Church of Christ in Greater Greenville, SC*, around 1980.

The tireless devotion of Ed and Madge Meixner to New Testament Christianity lives on in the faith of their children, Mary Louise and Clovis, and their spouses and children. Mary Lou married Ken Durham, Sr., who was an elder at congregations in Texas, North Carolina, and Greenville, South Carolina, where they live today. Clovis served many years as an elder for the Rochester, Michigan, Church of Christ, where he and his wife Jo reside. Ed and Madge Meixner have nine grandchildren and thirteen great-grandchildren.

Moving to Greenville, SC, following Ed's retirement in 1972, the Meixners lost no time finding new avenues of kingdom and community service. They both continued their longtime involvement as Bible correspondence course teachers. Madge became something of a local celebrity for her volunteer work at the hospital. A recent feature story in the Greenville *News*, acclaiming her record of distinguished service, opened this way: "When she first applied as a hospital volunteer, Madge Meixner was told by the interviewer that her age might be a problem; but that was twenty years ago."

Ed not only worked in his son-in-law's office, he also served as a helper at the local mental health center and as a volunteer income tax advisor during tax season. As he had done for so many years in Pittsburgh, Ed edited the church bulletin for the Northeast Church in Greenville. After he gave up his editing duties, he continued to contribute a regular church bulletin column, "Devoted to One Other," until he was almost 90 years old.

In his memoirs, completed for the occasion of their sixtieth anniversary, Ed penned tender words about the woman he described as "my greatest treasure...my greatest reward in life." His tribute to Madge, modeled after the Proverbs 31 celebration of a godly woman, concluded: "From the figurative mountaintop, let me shout these praises to you, Madge, at the risk of violating the shyness of your nature. You have, indeed, been God's special gift to me, and I am eternally grateful to you for the past 60 years!"

Seventy Christmases after that winter's day in 1924, we pause to honor this singularly Christian marriage that has spanned most of the twentieth century. Others with greater financial means will be honored with their names on buildings and memorials. But the spiritual philanthropy of Ed and Madge Meixner will stand always as a monument to their faithfulness to God and one another. Their lasting tribute is written on the walls of eternity.

Ken Durham, Jr. serves the Church in Falls Church, VA. He is well-respected as an effective pulpiteer and author. This tribute to his grandparents is written at our request. The Meixners are a remarkable couple, a blessing to their community, and exemplary Christians in the Northeast church in Greenville (Taylors), SC. **Carolina Christian** *is happy to salute them on the occasion of their seventieth anniversary. Contact Ken Durham, Jr. at PO Box 1036, Falls Church, VA 22041-1036; contact the Meixners at 3316 E. North St., Greenville, SC 29615-1906.*

Honor to Whom Honor

A Tribute to a Christian Gentleman and His Wife

By Joe Carter

I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS TIME TO tell a story about a man and his wife of sixty-five years. I am writing on the first anniversary of his death.

Hix and Pauline (Polly, as the church people would call her) Carter met at her sister's while in high school in Mocksville, NC. Quite the athlete, much of their time revolved around Hix's games at local baseball fields. There were several such playing fields at Jericho—which is where their courtship developed.

Pauline was a member of the church and her influence persuaded him to become a member of the church as well. They were both baptized in a local creek. That setting is where Carolina Bible Camp and Retreat Center is now located. The camp occupies land that once belonged to Pauline's oldest brother, Lee Boles.

Hix and Pauline were married in York, SC on February 23, 1928. They began living with Pauline's oldest sister, Mary, in Winston-Salem, NC in the summer of '28, where they exchanged light housekeeping for room and board. Hix worked as a sheet metal fabricator and furnace installer for the husband of another of Pauline's sisters, until the depression put him out of business. For approximately the next ten years, Hix collected and sold insurance on a debit route with Imperial Life Insurance Company, a job be was introduced to by another one of Pauline's siblings, her brother, Howard Boles. Hix and Pauline survived the depression years on approximately twelve dollars a week. They kept records of income and expenses in a small book,

Hix and Pauline Carter

and believe it or not, they managed to save a little!

When the war (WWII) came along, Uncle Sam needed skilled sheet metal workers. Hix served well in Civil Service and was one of the last to leave the Wilmington Shipyards. The family lived at Carolina Beach during those years. Strong and lasting friendships were developed with the church people at Carolina Beach and Wilmington. (I also remember the fish—we fished regularly in those days. It was years before I realized that there was a meat shortage during the war; but we never wanted for fish. I was a grown man before I developed a taste for fish again.)

When the war was over Hix moved our family back to Winston-Salem, to the same house that had been their home since 1938, and where Hix and Pauline would live throughout their life together. Moving companies would go out of business if everyone moved like them! The message here is contentment. They were content with their earthly home because they had their eyes set on another home. They were humble and happy people who lived by an unyielding faith.

When the Carter family returned to Winston-Salem, the church was still meeting at Goldfloss Street, but shortly afterwards, a new and modern building was erected on South Main Street. (That building is now owned by the NC School of the Arts and the congregation's meetinghouse is at Linville Forest near Kernersville, NC.) The church prospered during those years and as a result of the growth some Christians from the South Main and the Warner's Chapel congregations formed the South Fork Church of Christ. Services were held at the South Fork Gym until the building at Keating Drive was constructed. Hix and Pauline remained faithful members of the South Fork church throughout their active lives.

Hix and Pauline understood the truth about the church and were willing to stand up for the church and its scriptural foundation when there were those who sought to lead it astray. This commitment to truth was life-long and because it was so deeply entrenched, it had far-reaching influence. If a congregation needed a fill-in speaker, a Sunday School teacher—Hix was there. There were many times when he would teach a Sunday School lesson in one congregation and drive to another to deliver a sermon. His lessons were always relevant and biblically sound. He was a capable and resourceful speaker who knew his material well. Whether it was a lesson for a Bible class, a sermon, or funeral, he was always well prepared. He was always at ease, with an engaging smile, and a comforting word. Through the years he served as teacher, preacher, deacon, and elder.

Should there be a sick relative or church person, Hix and Pauline were there. Many months Hix would travel all week long in his work as a candy salesman, and then come home for the weekend and sit up with a sick loved one. If there were ever a sick person at church who needed a hot meal, or when there were occasions for wedding or baby showers, Pauline was on the way. Visiting and encouraging others her joy in life. They made a happy couple.

The church was blessed with many wonderful people from this time period who gave so unselfishly of themselves. In a way, they came from a different world—one that is hard for many today to identify with. They came through a lot of adversity, and, as a result, they developed a strong faith in God and confidence in themselves. (I remember a case in point: During the depression years, Dad would ride a bus to Mt. Airy from Winston-Salem once a week to collect an insurance debit route. he would ride there and then walk through the town and country collecting five, ten, and twenty-five cent premiums.) Taking pride in whatever job he did, and doing it well, was his trademark.

As noted earlier, there were many people with similar backgrounds in that different world before—before restaurants on every corner; when you had a houseful of friends for Sunday dinner; before television; before two or more cars per family; before being unable to take a neighbors word as gold; before rampant consumerism; before so much of what is taken for granted today. Hix and Pauline, in the relatively short years of their lives, saw the advent of the automobile and the super-highway, radio, aviation, television, space travel, and computers. They experienced more change in their lifetimes than any prior generation in history.

I thank the Lord for having such wonderful parents; my dad was, and my mother continues to be, truly special. They encouraged and set an example, not only for me, but for a host of others, many of whom have told me that the care shown by Hix and Pauline Carter made the difference in their being in the church today. They were supporters of Christian schools and ministries who put there pocketbooks where their hearts were. I was happy to tell them, while they were still able to appreciate it, that I wanted to establish a fund in their honor to benefit Christian education, to help young men and women, while, at the same time, saying thanks to a faithful Christian couple who gave so generously of themselves. Hix and Pauline Carter made a difference in their world, and one could tell they were Christians by their good works, not by a "fish" on the back of their car.

This fund was established for the purpose of providing support to young people with financial need to attend Christian schools. The fund will grow for a few years and will pay out interest when it accrues. I will administer the fund in the short term, and then turn it over to the church to carry out its charter. The fund qualifies for tax-deductible contributions.

Joe Carter, a member of the South Stokes church, may be contacted at PO Box 917, King, NC 27021-0917. Contributions to the Hix and Pauline Carter Christian Education Foundation may be sent to the same address.

Suffering: Survival by Faith

By Tiffany Scobey

"GOD IS GREAT, GOD IS GOOD. Let us thank him..." for everything that He gives us. Of course, we all want to thank God for the beautiful weather He gave us on the day of our picnic and for the healthy baby born to our friends. But how do we feel about thanking God for our favorite uncle's death, or for the fire that destroyed our minister's home? Most of the time, we don't feel much like praising this God of destruction. However, bad things are a fact of life, and they happen to the worst criminals as well as to the most saintly among us, often with no apparent rhyme or reason.

When I get hit with an unfavorable event, my gut reaction is to strike out at God. After all, He is the Lord of my life, so He must have planned the occurrence to happen to me, right? Well, not necessarily. Back in the more rational recesses of my mind, I recall the Bible story of Job, a man who suffered blamelessly for no reason known to him. I then find comfort in my adversity, as Job retained his sanity and love for God during his time of trouble.

But what was Jobs trick? How does his glory offer me hope? The answer is *faith*. In Hebrews 11:1, the Bible defines faith as "the promise of things hoped for; the evidence of things unseen." The man, Job, had no clue whatsoever as to why God was letting him suffer through such misery, but still he trusted in his belief in God. Job believed that although God had seemed to turn His back on him—or even to spite him—that God was watching over him and had a reason for what was happening. Until God's response near the end of the story, Job was talking to what appeared to be empty space. God wasn't answering Job's cries, no matter how much Job besought him, but still Job continued to direct his words to God Himself.

Not only did Job keep his faith in God, he also kept believing in himself. The three "comforters" who came to offer Job support actually ended up bashing him. Job was a blameless and upright man, the story says, but the three friends simply ignored that reality. They persisted in blaming deaths of his children and servants as well as his own illness on his sinfulness! Furthermore, they attacked Job's faith by chiding him about his insistence that he had not sinned. Even when Job was being forsaken from all sides, he remained steadfast in his belief that he had not sinned.

Job's faith in himself is another important lesson to be learned from the story. For example, imagine a girl who is kind and compassionate to all around her. She attends church faithfully, she prays the right way, she does all the "right" things. Then one day, her boyfriend of two years, whom she loves dearly, breaks up with her with no explanation. At this point, two reactions are possible. On one hand, the girl could get discouraged with herself and blame her own actions for the breakup, which in reality was not at all her fault. She would likely become severely depressed and reluctant to ever attempt a romantic relationship again. Or, the girl could dig into her faith in herself; and, instead of immediately blaming herself, look to other possible causes for the breakup. Although she is sorely disappointed over the loss of her boyfriend, she can pick up the pieces and go on with no incidence of self-deprecation. The girl can gain strength through believing in her own goodness. Possibly, the relationship is salvageable and, in time, she and her companion will once again be in communication with each other.

We should be aware, then, that prayer and faith have a symbiotic relationship. One cannot exist without the other. For if you do not pray, how can you show your faith? And if you do not have faith, to whom can you pray?

Job's story is analogous to this boyfriend-girlfriend relationship. Like the girl in our example, Job had fallen out of his best friend's good graces. And we see that Job, through faith and perseverance, returned into communication with God. Furthermore, faith comes into its true meaning in the story when, even after discourse with God, Job has no explanation for the tragedies that befell him. This trust exemplifies faith in God's works. As the girl gets reunited with her boyfriend who offers no explanation for his actions, she, too, will trust in her love that he had a reason for his actions, and not think less of him for not sharing that reason.

It sounds easy to keep faith through adversity, but in reality, it takes a lot of work. Fortunately, most of us Will never experience tragedy in our whole lives to the extent that Job did—all of this family members, save his wife, were killed; his herds and servants were destroyed; his home caved in; and his skin was afflicted with painful sores. Isn't it amazing? A man in this sordid situation can still believe in God and in himself! Most of us today would be lying around griping and cursing! So what gave Job the strength and the presence of mind to remain faithful? Certainly, he was distraught over his situation, but he had an outlet through which to vent his frustrations. In fact, it was this very outlet that finally put an end to his wondering and agony. What was this outlet? Drugs? Exceedingly loud rock music? A sharp sword and a few dozen small animals? NO! Of course not! Job's outlet was prayer to the God whom he knew!

"Wait a minute," someone who has read the book of Job might be saying. "I don't remember any prayers in that story." It's true—there is no prayer that fits our usual definition of prayer. But Job's lament to the LORD was a type of prayer. Perhaps a more accurate way to describe it is as a cry for help. Job was praying for someone, namely God, to listen to his pleas. By putting his emotions and feelings into words, Job was able to sort through them and pick out his real troubles. Prayer, even this lashing out at God, offered Job some peace of mind. He didn't blow up at his three friends (although it seems as if he would have liked to at times), and he didn't turn his anger inward on himself; instead, he took out his frustrations on God, who did not hurt from it. In fact, God was in a better position to be with Job and to help him since He knew the type of help Job wanted. It is important to understand that Job was not angry at God; he was angry at his situation, and was merely venting his anger on God. Again, Job showed his faith in God by not disowning Him.

We should be aware, then, that prayer and faith have a symbiotic relationship. One cannot exist without the other. For if you do not pray, how can you show your faith? And if you do not have faith, to whom can you pray?

It may also help to look at trouble from God's point of view. God has faith in us, too! In the book of Job, God called Satan's attention to Job because He thought that Job was a strong believer in Him and would not let Him down during trying times. God was taking a gamble in letting these horrible things happen. He had told Satan that Job would remain true to him, but He didn't know that for sure. Job could have cursed God from square one and caused God terrible embarrassment (if God can get embarrassed!). However, Job must have been able to handle the trials that were placed upon him. As a matter of fact, God says in the Bible that He will not test you beyond what you can bear. God proved His statement true in Job's case. Taken the optimistic way, this statement is even a bit flattering—in our worst nightmare of trials, in troubles that we never imagined we could survive, we can know that God has enough faith in us to believe that we can bear it!

If we look at our troubles through this light, we can emerge stronger than we were originally. In the story, Job gets "rewarded" with twice as many possessions as he had before. Although we may not always receive a material reward, we *will* get some type of reward. It could be a larger circle of friends, a closer relationship with God, an improved outlook on life, or any number of other blessings. No matter the reward or the situation, God will surely watch over us, as he watched over Job, in our times of trouble.

Tiffany Scobey is a nineteen-year-old sophomore at Elon College. She is a Dean's List student who plans to major in physics. She is a member of the Mebane Steet church in Burlington, NC where she teaches Sunday School for four to six year-old children. Contact Tiffany at 204 Meadowood Dr., Burlington, NC 27215.

When You Don't Have a Prayer, What Then?

By Steve Ashworth

"THESE WERE MORE FAIR-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

As we begin, what does this passage tell you about the Bereans, about whom it speaks? First, when they heard God's Word, they eagerly received it. Second, when they heard God's Word, they searched the Scriptures every day to see is the message watched up with what God had said. I ask you to join me in imitating their attitude, particularly during this study. As I have tried to have this attitude in my life, I have encountered a growing problem. the more I compare what some people say with what God's Word says, the bigger my problem becomes. Specifically, it's what much of the religious world says about salvation. Even more specifically, it is what is said that a person must do to move from an unsaved condition to a saved condition. Much of the Protestant religious world is in agreement that the move from being unsaved to being saved occurs in a prayer. Some call it "confessing Christ," Some term it "calling on the name of the Lord," and some label it "the sinner's prayer." That would be fine, except for one thing: I have yet to find a single person in the Bible who went from being lost to being saved because of a prayer! It strikes me that if prayer were the vehicle to salvation, there would be specific people in the Bible who got there in it.

I have listened to the arguments and studied the verses used to support "the sinner's prayer." Someone says, "What about the thief on the cross (Luke 23:39–43)? Didn't he say, 'Lord, remember me...?' And didn't Jesus respond, '...today you will be with Me in Paradise?'" Well, Jesus had "power on earth to forgive sins" (Matt. 9:6), so He forgave people in different ways during His earthly ministry. But once He arose from the dead, He told His men to "Go therefore and make disciples...baptizing them... teaching them..." (Matt. 28:19–20).

Someone else says, "What about the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9–14)? Didn't the tax collector pray the first sinner's prayer,'God be merciful to me a sinner!', and didn't Jesus subsequently say, 'I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other...' (v. 14)? If he was justified, doesn't that mean he was saved?" Well, both were Jews, under the Old Covenant, coming to the temple to fulfill religious obligation. Since they were Jews in the time of Jesus, New Covenant salvation wasn't the issue. The issue of the story is humility before God, not salvation from sin.

Someone else says, "But didn't Jesus say, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me' (Rev. 3:20)? Are we not to instruct people to 'invite Jesus into their hearts' on the basis of this Scripture?" When you read the context of the verse, you discover that Jesus said those words to a lukewarm church! The church at Laodicea was full of saved, yet satisfied, Christians who needed to repent of sin as Christians.

Someone says, "Now I've got you. Paul himself said, 'For "whoever calls upon the name on the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13).' What other way is there to call upon the name of the Lord but through prayers?" Well, Luke would respond with the words of Ananias to Paul himself, when he was known as Saul of Tarsus, in Acts 22:16, "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Luke says that Saul would call on the name of the Lord in the waters of baptism, and the Lord would answer by washing Saul's sins away. He did, and the rest, as they say, is history.

As I compare what many of my religious neighbors say with the message of Scripture, I am driven to one conclusion: how can I go before God on judgment Day and base my salvation on something I can't even find in the Bible? "When You Don't Have A Prayer, What Then?" I hope you will join me in imitation of those Bereans in Acts 1 7:11. Receive the word of God. Then make sure that the message you hear matches the message you read in God's Word.

Steve Ashworth preaches for the church in Williston, SC. Contact him at PO Box 255, Williston, SC 29853-0255.

Success in Campus Ministry

By David Holcomb

FOR A CAMPUS MINISTER, THE END of the academic year can be discouraging. I am often saddened to see many hours of prayer and service towards building-up a particular group of people come to a sudden end: students graduate, leadership roles are left vacant, group vision and relationship bonds diminish with the separation brought by the end of the year. Much energy has been invested in a specific group of people—a particular spiritual house—but this group suddenly is no more. The following year marks the beginning of the rebuilding process, and this rebuilding takes place every year.

When focusing strictly on developing a strong campus ministry program, the discouragement brought on by the annual rebuilding process can be crushing. Thankfully, there is a different—and much better—perspective.

Over the past few years, I have come to focus less on the immediate evidences of "success" in our campus ministry; instead, I now view our goal as one of preparing students to serve effectively wherever they go upon graduation. Campus ministry has less to do with what happens on the campus than with what happens through people's lives upon leaving campus. This ministry is a training ground, a place to "equip the saints for the work of ministry" (Eph. 4:12). Through this training, young men and women enter congregations and communities prepared for service in the name of Jesus. They enter with a solid base of scriptural knowledge and with practical experiences in ministering to brothers and sisters, friends and classmates, people across the U.S. and around the world. They enter with a faith that is growing because of struggles they have faced and opportunities they have seized. They enter with an appreciation of being part of a spiritual family and a sense of how this family can be used by God to influence the world.

All university students are preparing for their future lives and careers, and they will devote much time and effort to this end. As church leaders, parents, and concerned Christians, may we challenge our current and future university students to embrace the goal of preparing for their spiritual lives. May we take on the vision of equipping people for ministry in a world so desperately in need.

David Holcomb, Campus Missionary, 1617 Cole Mill Rd, Church of Christ Durham, NC.

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